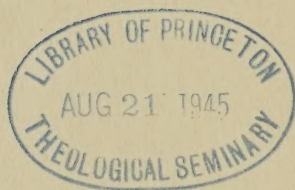


THE RETURN OF THE LORD

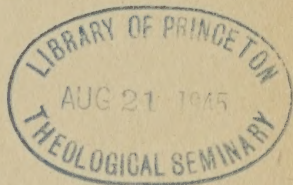
A.C. GAEBELEIN



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Gaebelein, Arno Clemens,
1861-1945
The return of the Lord

The Return of the Lord

What the New Testament teaches about the second coming of Christ. An examination of the leading passages in the New Testament dealing with His return.



By

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Editor of "Our Hope"

PUBLICATION OFFICE "OUR HOPE"

456 FOURTH AVENUE

NEW YORK, N. Y.

And All Booksellers

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CHAPTER I

THE RETURN OF THE LORD

Almost nineteen hundred years ago there stood on a mountain slope near Jerusalem a group of men. In their midst stood One whom they had followed as their Master and Lord. For many months they had listened to the words of life, which came from His lips, and witnessed the miracles of divine power and mercy, which were wrought by Him in every section of Israel's land. The eyes of the blind were opened instantaneously; the paralytics walked; the dumb spake; the deaf heard. Many cursed with leprosy were cleansed by His commanding power. Three times death had to release its prey. A young girl and a young man, after physical death had claimed them, were restored to life. They had seen a greater miracle than the one at Nain's gate, when He had stopped a funeral and turned weeping into laughter of joy. One of His friends had been four days in the grave. He spoke the word and the dead arose. Thousands had been fed by Him also in a miraculous way. The wind and the waves obeyed His word.

Three of their number had seen Him in a startling transfiguration. They heard a supernatural voice, which declared Him to be the Son of God. They all knew that their Master and Teacher is the promised Messiah, the Son of David. What Peter voiced, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" was the deep conviction of each heart.

Then came the seeming tragedy. What He had predicted came to pass. They delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles. He was unjustly condemned. They nailed Him to the cross, where He died. He was buried. He arose from among the dead on the third day. After that He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs. He appeared in

their meeting room, passing through closed doors. He walked with them and talked with them. He ate in their presence. Once more they are together. It is a farewell meeting. For the last time they look into His face; for the last time they hear His words; for the last time He gives them command and promise. Then all at once He extended His hands in blessing, the hands where they still beheld the marks of His erstwhile passion.

As Elisha, when he followed Elijah, his master, knew that something was about to happen, that Elijah would leave him without knowing the manner of his departure, so these disciples knew that their Lord would be taken from them, yet they knew not how He would leave them. They must have remembered His words, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John xvi:28). They knew the hour had come when they were to be orphaned.

"And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke xxiv: 51). "And when He had spoken these words, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts i:9). His feet, which, for thirty three years had walked the earth, the creation of His hands, left the ground, and gradually He is lifted into space. For a brief moment they beheld Him carried upward, when a cloud received Him and He vanished from their sight. The last vision they had of their beloved Lord was in the cloud, which took Him to His eternal dwelling place. And that cloud was not a cloud of vapour. The clouds of the sky are but "the dust of His feet" (Nahum i:3). The cloud which received Him was the shining garment of glory, the Shekinah, with which, in olden times, He had manifested Himself in the midst of His people Israel; the glory which prophets had seen

in pre-incarnation days. What He had foretold had come to pass; He had died; He had been raised from the dead; and now He returned to the Father.

“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts i:10-11). They could not take their eyes off the spot where they had seen Him disappear. Their eyes were fixed on the heavens. And then they listened to the message of His coming again from the same heavens, in like manner. They were familiar with this promise, for He had often spoken to them about His return, when they would see Him once more. They left the ascension mount filled with a joyous hope and glorious anticipation. Their physical attitude as they had looked steadfastly toward heaven became the spiritual attitude of the Church, born on the day when the Holy Spirit came down to earth. The Lord Jesus Christ was the all absorbing object before the heart of the early Church. Many of the believers had known Him in His life of humiliation, and the thousands of converts who believed on His name and were added to the body of Christ, who had never seen Him, heard from the lips of the disciples of His loveliness and graciousness. To see Him in His glory must have been the highest wish of the early Christians. Of them Peter wrote, “Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though ye now see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter i:8).

The Apostle's doctrine included as a prominent truth of Christianity the blessed hope of His return. It was taught the young converts from paganism that Christ will return, and will become King over all the earth. When the Holy

Spirit unfolded the full truth as to redemption, and the Church of Christ, His body and His bride, the blessed hope was revealed as the great consummating event of the redemption plan of God. As we show in the examination of the many Scripture passages in this volume, if the hope of His return is given up, it means more than an incomplete and mutilated Gospel; it means the collapse of true Christian doctrine.

Research in patristic literature, the writings of the Ante-Nicene fathers, has shown that for at least 300 years the Church universal believed in and hoped for, the coming of the Lord. They waited for the coming of the Bridegroom. But what the Lord had indicated in His parable of the ten virgins (Matt. xxv) came to pass: "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." The immediate coming of the Lord was no longer expected, and as the professing Church became corrupted by false doctrines and priestly assumption, the blessed hope was entirely forgotten. Occasionally during the centuries which followed an alarm was raised that the great judgment day was soon to come. It was so in the beginning of the seventh century and more so when the year 1000 A. D. had come. Then it was universally believed that the *Dies irae*, the day of wrath, was about to break and the end of the world was at hand. The priests made the most of it and the "Church" gathered in enormous riches. The frightened people brought vast treasures so as to be ready for the judgment day, as if the "Church" would have any need of these riches when the world came to an end. Thus "the blessed hope" like other doctrines of the faith delivered unto the Saints, had become for many centuries a forgotten truth.

Forgotten truths were gradually recovered, and the last of all brought back to the Church, is the truth of the return of the Lord as the hope of the Church. The Reformation did

not bring this recovery. The mighty men of God, the chosen instruments of the Spirit of God, to lead the people of God out of Romish night, paid little attention to the study of the truth of the Lord's return. John Knox, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and Martin Luther believed that Christ would return. They held the belief of their times, that when He makes good His promised second coming it would bring the end of all things. Dr. Martin Luther did not share the optimism of others that the church of the Reformation would lead on in victory and conquer the world for Christ. The writer has a copy of a sermon preached by Luther on "The Second Advent of Christ"; the date of publication is 1539. In it he did not predict smooth things, but voiced the opinion that the anti-Christian forces would gather strength, that the Church would become more carnal, that true doctrines would be abandoned before the Lord comes again. He also states that the Lord would find a small remnant only awaiting His coming. But it was not given to these great servants of the Lord to discover and herald the details of the lost hope.

Only in recent times the "Mid-night cry" has sounded forth to arouse the sleeping virgins, representing Christendom, and to restore to His true Church "that blessed hope." About a hundred years ago the Lord used a number of men, whose names are hardly known and recognized by Church historians, to unlock the blessed secrets of the Lord's coming and the truths which cluster around it. These men were godly, scholarly and humble. They possessed what is so rare today—humility, self-effacement paired with true scholarship. Through them was sounded forth, in Great Britain first of all, the mid-night cry "Behold the Bridegroom! Go ye forth to meet Him." A great revival of the study of prophecy followed and that resulted in the mighty and far reaching revivals of the nineteenth century, by which

countless thousands were saved. It brought about a greater activity in foreign missionary work. And now all the world hears of the truth of Christ's coming back to earth again some future day. Thousands of volumes have been published in scores of languages teaching the return of our Lord. Hymns are sung which express faith, hope and joy in anticipation of that glorious event. Conferences for the study of prophecy have been held and are being held throughout Christendom, and those who gather are inspired, by the fact of His coming, to greater devotion to the Lord and more self-sacrificing service for him and for humanity. For many years every outstanding evangelist has been a believer and a preacher of the Lord's return. Some of the greatest and most successful missionary movements, like the China Inland Mission, have been inaugurated and maintained by those who believe in the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also an interesting fact that all the best and most spiritual expositors of the Word of God for a number of years have been the men who know and teach the hope of His coming.

Whenever the Holy Spirit revives a great truth, the enemy, the other spirit, begins at once to antagonize that truth. This he does in different ways. One of his ways is to put a counterfeit truth alongside of the real truth; in other words, he perverts the truth. He also is satisfied to let the restored truth stand as it is, and instead of fighting it openly, he links with it some of his soul destroying errors. In this way he succeeds in bringing the truth into disrepute. Then he uses the friends of the truth to hurt the truth, in making them fanatics and extremists. All this and much more he has done with the truth of the return of the Lord.

Satan hates the Word of God and the Son of God. The first time the old serpent acted, he made a strike at the Word of God (Gen. iii); the second time he attacked the Son of

God (Matt. iv). He hates the truth of the Lord's coming as much as he hates the truth of the Gospel of our salvation. As soon as the blessed hope had been restored to the Church in a definite and Scriptural testimony, he used the Irvingite movement to hurt that truth. First he introduced the fanatical claim of the restoration of Pentecostal gifts, such as the gifts of speaking in a foreign tongue, prophecy and healing. This was followed by one of the worst errors which men can teach, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ had a fallen nature. Yet Edward Irving and his followers were strong believers in the second coming of Christ and taught it, for a time at least, in the Scriptural way. Then came the so-called Millerite delusion. Miller and the mother of the unscriptural Seventh Day Adventist cult, Mrs. White, were the subtle tools of the enemy. They claimed to have visions and direct revelations from God. Then dates were set in which the Lord would appear. This delusion did an untold harm in that generation, and the enemies of the study of prophecy still use the hallucinations of the originators of Seventh Day Adventism as a warning against such a study. The present day teaching of the Seventh Day cult is perniciously unscriptural. The whole truth of the blessed hope is perverted by these errorists. Mormonism, the delusion of the Latter Day Saints, likewise mumbles about His return. Mormonism is a semi-pagan religion, and yet they teach that Christ will come back to earth.

Perhaps the worst of all cults which teaches the return of our Lord, and which has done more harm among those who seek the truth than the Irvingites, the Adventists and the Mormons, is the Russell-cult. It was started by a man who called himself "Pastor" Charles T. Russell. According to his scheme Christ came again in 1874. Since that time Russell taught, Christ has been here. Some of his deluded

women followers claimed that Russell was Christ. Then forty years later He was to be revealed as King and the millennium was to begin. But what happened forty years later in 1914 is known to everybody. Besides teaching such inventions he denied the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ; he denied the physical resurrection of the body of Christ, and taught other abominable errors. The system once known as "Millennial Dawnism" has changed its name but not its teachings. It goes now by the name of "The International Bible Student Association."

Still more subtle are the numerous Pentecostal movements, such as the "Apostolic Faith"—"Latter Rain"—"McPhersonism" and others. As we have shown in our volume on the "Healing Question," church-history records many similar movements in the past. The last was the Irvingite movement. These Pentecostal cults claim a return to Apostolic times, another Pentecost and with it the restoration of one of the inferior gifts of the Spirit, which is the easiest to counterfeit, the gift of tongues. With it goes faith-healing, generally called "Divine Healing." Pentecostalism makes much of the coming of the Lord. They claim to have visions and trances in which they see Him coming. Some, like Mrs. McPherson of Los Angeles, claim verbal inspiration for their "messages" about the coming of the Lord. The different men and women healers, who attract thousands by their propaganda, like the Bosworth Brothers, Price, McPherson and others, also teach about His coming.

And this is not all. The late war produced a large number of men and women, who instead of interpreting prophecy, turned to prophesying. They picked out the unfortunate Hohenzollern as the Anti-christ. They set the exact year when the Lord would come again. They were all found out

as false prophets. But it has not discouraged them from trying again. We have collected pamphlets and articles in which every year, since 1916, is prophesied to be the year of His return. Even now a pamphlet is advertised in a number of magazines, which should never lend their pages for such propaganda, in which the author tries to answer in a perverted way the question "How long to the end?" from the last chapter of Daniel. We have always warned and do so now against this unscriptural date and day setting, which is one of the devil's choicest weapons against a sane and Scriptural study of the truth of the Lord's return. And there is still more to be said. Those who held the Scriptural truth on this doctrine have become unsettled; some, for different reasons, have abandoned it altogether; others have accepted new theories as to the Church in relation to His coming, and one teaches now that no one need to trouble about a coming "great tribulation" preceding His return, for, as he says, there will be no tribulation(!)

We have felt therefore that a simple setting forth, wholly from the New Testament, of the truth of the Lord's coming, is demanded by these conditions. The best way to get hold of the truth is by turning to the Word of God and examining the different passages, in an exegetical way, which deal with that particular truth. We have done so in this little volume.

The Modernist does not believe it. The Modernist of the last days of this age is prophesied in 2 Peter iii:1-4. He sneers at His return. How can he believe in such a return? If the Lord Jesus came into the world like every other human being comes into the world, as the Modernist believes by denying the Virgin Birth, then the Lord Jesus also died like every other human being dies, was buried like every other human being was and remained in the grave like every

other human being remained there. How can He return, if He was not raised from the dead? From the side of the Modernist we expect nothing but sneers. He is hopeless.

But we hope and pray that the simple way in which the doctrine of our Lord's return is unfolded in the pages which follow will open the eyes of many believers who have treated the blessed hope with indifference. Books about the coming of the Lord are good enough, but many of them theorize and do not use the Scriptures as they should be used. Real light and conviction comes through the illumination of the Holy Spirit from the Text of the Word of God. We expect that this volume will be greatly used, not because it is a better book than others, for it is not, but because the Scriptures are so prominently displayed in its pages.

We also hope that those who have followed men who claim to give "new light" and who have abandoned the simplicity of prophetic interpretation, will also be benefited by reading the progressive development of the doctrine of His Return as presented from the Scriptures.

CHAPTER II

THE RETURN OF THE LORD IN THE GOSPELS

The Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew may rightly be termed the Genesis of the New Testament. It is the bridge which leads from the Old dispensation into the New. Its character is Jewish and dispensational; in it the Son of God is presented as Messiah the King, the Son of David, who came as the "minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. xv:8). The promises made unto the fathers are the promises of the kingdom, covenanted to David. The angelic annunciation of His birth includes the throne of David and the kingdom. "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke ii:32, 33). The Gospel of Matthew reveals therefore that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of David, that He came as the King offering the promised kingdom to His own people, that the offered kingdom was not accepted and afterward He Himself was rejected. The divine arrangement of the first twelve chapters is of great importance. On the correct interpretation of these twelve chapters depends the right understanding of much of the teaching of the rest of the New Testament. We give a brief review.

In the *first* chapter the genealogy of the Lord Jesus and His birth are given. The genealogy shows that He is legally entitled to the throne of David, through Joseph.* The *second* chapter contains the record of the wise men from the

*For a complete exposition of the genealogy see the author's Exposition of Matthew.

East, seeking the newborn king of the Jews. No other Gospel records this interesting incident. The Gospel of Matthew being the Gospel of the King is the only Gospel into which this visit of these Gentiles fits. It is an instructive event which foreshadows future history. The Gentiles from afar come first to seek the King, while Jerusalem knows nothing of her King, and no priest, elder or scribe went to Bethlehem to worship Him. The *third* chapter shows the herald of the King, who announces the nearness of the kingdom, with the soon appearing of the King, and how the Lord Jesus entered upon His official ministry. In the *fourth* chapter the Lord Jesus being tested by the devil, is proven to be the King, the Holy One, who had no sin and could not sin. Immediately after He began to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Chapters *five*, *six* and *seven* contain the so-called Sermon on the Mount, which only this Gospel records in full. The great discourse may rightly be called "the proclamation of the King" as to His Kingdom and its righteous government. Then follow two chapters in which a number of miracles are put together, taken out of their different settings, to demonstrate that He who spoke with authority, is the omnipotent King, the Son of God. In the *tenth* chapter we find the sending forth of the messengers of the King to preach the message of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, giving them the power to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers and to raise the dead. The *eleventh* and *twelfth* chapters reveal the fact that neither the message nor the King would be accepted by the people, but that He and the kingdom would be rejected.

With the *twelfth* chapter the kingdom preaching ceases. No longer goes forth the message "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The King now speaks as prophet and announces the mysteries of the kingdom, the present age and its religious

and moral characteristics. He also speaks prophetically of His coming passion, that He would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, be crucified and raised from the dead; He speaks of the future building of His Church and announces His return to this earth. There was no need for Him to speak prophetically of the literal kingdom, for that kingdom is the burden of all the prophets in the Old Testament; the blessings and glories of the earthly kingdom were known to the believing Jew as they are known to us.

The first prophetic utterances of our Lord are therefore found after the preaching of the kingdom had been rejected, that is, after the twelfth chapter. It is true in connection with the healing of the centurion's servant He had announced the rejection of the children of the kingdom, and the calling of the Gentiles, and at other occasions He hinted at future events (Matt. viii:11, 12; x:16-34; xi:20-24; xii:40-45), but these hints were given in connection with the anticipated rejection.

In the *thirteenth* chapter He is seen sitting by the seaside. He had left the house, and spoke to the multitude and to His disciples in parables. These parables reveal the mysteries of the kingdom. It is no longer the literal kingdom, but the development of the religious conditions of this dispensation. Our age with the King absent, His truth and doctrine preached and offered to the whole world, was unrevealed in the Old Testament. It was kept secret (xiii:35). In these parables He speaks of His future work at the end of the present age. The first parable pictures prophetically the coming world-wide dissemination of the good seed. The second parable shows that this age will be a mixed age, the wheat and the tares grow together in the field till the harvest comes.* The harvest is the end of the age, not "the end of

*See our Commentary on Matthew Vol. ii, p. 1-25.

the world." At the end of the age, when the harvesting takes place, He will act, sending forth His angels as reapers, who gather the tares for the burning, while the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (xiii:38-43).

In the *sixteenth* chapter we find the first direct prophetic utterance of our Lord as to His second coming. He is with His disciples at the coast of Caesarea Philippi, the borderland of the Gentiles. In answer to His question Peter confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Upon this God-given testimony the Lord predicted the future building of the Church upon Himself as the rock (verse 18); the future ministry of Peter (verse 19); His coming rejection, death and resurrection on the third day (verse 21) and then follows the prophetic announcement of another coming of Himself.

Chapter xvi:27 "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works." Unmistakably He speaks of another coming. It is to be in the glory of His Father; the angels will accompany Him, and His coming will bring reward to every man according to his works. It could not mean His first coming for He speaks of an event in the future, nor did He reward every man according to his works at His first advent. The verse which follows presents an apparent difficulty: "*Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.*" The reasoning of many commentators on these additional words of our Lord is as follows: The Lord could not have meant a literal, a personal coming of Himself, for all those who heard Him utter these words have died. He meant a spiritual coming of Himself. These expositors apply mostly His coming in His kingdom to the gift of the Holy Spirit; they teach that He came on the day of Pente-

cost. But how can the coming of the Holy Spirit reasonably be the coming of the Son of Man? The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is the second person. Nor did the angels appear on the day when the Spirit of God came to earth. And what about "rewarding every man according to his works"? Other commentators say, He meant the destruction of Jerusalem, while still others identify His coming with the death of the Christian. But did He appear with His angels in the year 70, or did He give then every man according to his works? As far as the death of the believer is concerned, Scripture makes it clear that when the believer dies he goes to be with the Lord, and therefore it cannot be the coming of the Lord.

The chapter division in this part of Matthew's Gospel is unfortunate. There should be no break here. The next chapter records the transfiguration, to which our Lord referred, when He announced that some of those who stood there should see Him coming. From 2 Peter i:16-20 we learn the deeper meaning of His transfiguration. Peter in this passage declares that he was an eyewitness of His majesty, and that he made known unto believers the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. That wonderful scene on the holy mountain was a pattern of the return of the Lord in power and glory, when He comes in His kingdom, surrounded by His Saints, represented by Moses and Elijah, one who had died, the other who had gone to heaven without dying. The Lord's face shone like the sun; He is clothed with the glory of the Father. As He stood upon that mountain, so will He stand some future day upon this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords, attended by His Saints and the angels of God.

Chapter xix:28 "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration

when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." These words were spoken by our Lord when the rich young man had left Him, and Peter asked the question "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee, what shall we have therefore?" Here again our Lord speaks of reward for those who have followed Him. He does not promise rewards at the present time. There will be a regeneration, a time when all things will be made new, and when that time comes He will not be the occupant of the Father's throne, but will receive His own throne, the throne of His glory. Then He will reign and judge, and His own will be associated with Him. But the time of regeneration for the earth, the deliverance of groaning creation, does not come till He receives the throne of His glory, and He will not receive that throne till He comes in the glory, of the Father and His angels with Him.

Chapter xxii:44 "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." He had quoted the one hundred and eighteenth Psalm concerning the stone the builders rejected, which becomes the head of the corner. The other New Testament references show that He is the stone, rejected by the Jews, and that He became the corner stone. While He does not mention His return in the quoted words, that event is clearly indicated. The Jews fell on the stone, rejected Christ, and were nationally and spiritually broken. The day comes when Christ, the stone, will fall on others and grind them to powder. The second chapter in Daniel gives us the complete picture of the smiting stone, which falls from heaven and deals the great man-image such a blow that every portion of it becomes like the chaff of the summer threshing floors (Dan. ii:35).* The stone which did the work becomes a

*See Exposition of Daniel by A. C. G., Chapter II.

mountain filling the whole earth. The man-image is the symbol of the times of the Gentiles, the stone represents the second coming of Christ, and the transformation of the stone into a mountain is the prophetic symbol of the world-wide kingdom of Christ.

Chapter xxiii:38, 39 "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." The last sentence is to be linked with His promised return. It will be fulfilled in the day of His second coming, when a remnant of believers from His own earthly people will welcome Him with the Messianic greeting recorded in Psalm cxviii.

We turn next to the greatest prophetic discourse of our Lord, the so called Olivet Discourse. Matthew gives it complete, while Mark and Luke contain certain omissions and additions. This greatest of all prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ has for its center His personal, visible and glorious return to this earth. He predicts events preceding His return, the event itself, what is connected with it, and the events which follow His return.

Chapter: xxiv:1-2 "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things. Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The full prophecy as to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is given by Luke. Here the bare fact is stated that the temple is to be destroyed. It is a serious error to apply what follows exclusively to the destruction of the temple and to Jerusalem. This event is not in view at all in the Gospel of Matthew. We shall demonstrate this as we follow the text.

After He had uttered the words as to the coming destruction of the temple buildings, the disciples asked Him questions as to His coming, the sign of His coming and the end of the age.

The great center of the discourse contained in *chapters xxiv and xxv* is found in verses 29 and 30 of the twenty-fourth chapter: "*Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*"

Preceding this great prophetic announcement the Lord speaks of the present age and more particularly of its end. The events which will transpire in connection with the Jewish people, rehabilitated in Palestine, a believing remnant suffering during the great tribulation, their deliverance, the restoration of the scattered tribes to their own land, are predicted by Him. Verses 4-45 of the twenty-fourth chapter contain these future events. We find next three parables in chapter xxiv:45 to chapter xxv:30. Each of these parables is related to His return. These parables reveal the religious conditions prevailing up to the time of His coming again, and how He will deal with these conditions. The final section of the prophetic disclosure shows Him upon the throne of His glory with the nations gathered about Him, whom He judges. This great judgment is prophesied by Him in chapter xxv:31-46. We take up each section briefly. Our complete commentary on Matthew in two volumes devotes nearly a hundred pages to this great portion of the first Gospel.

I. The events which precede His visible and personal return. The opening statements of this first section in verses

5-7 are applicable to the present age in a general way. Throughout this age there have been false Christs deceiving many; there have been wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. The many wars have always been followed by famines and pestilences. Every century has brought earthquakes in divers places. Our own generation has witnessed the greatest war of all history, followed by the greatest famines and the greatest pestilences. Furthermore we have also witnessed the greatest earthquakes of historic times. What a confirmation of the words of our Lord! Before this age ends the same things will happen again, but on a larger scale. The world is even now getting ready for it and Revelation vi, the breaking of the four seals, foretells these events likewise.

The greater portion of the discourse relating to this present age, is taken up with the end of it, as it will take place, not among the Gentiles, but among the Jews. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that our Lord calls special attention to the prophet Daniel and his predicted "abomination of desolation" (verse 15). The Danielian prophecy has nothing to do with the Church or the Gentiles, but the abomination of desolation takes place on Jewish ground, in Jerusalem and Palestine. The Jews are returning to their own land; a restoration in unbelief takes place before our eyes. It will be fully consummated in the near future when the national aspiration of Jewry will be realized in the long proposed Jewish state. When finally the true Church, the body of Christ, will no longer be on earth, when its supernatural removal (1 Thess. iv:16-18) has taken place, the Lord will call a remnant from among the masses of unbelieving Israelites; a part of this remnant will be in Palestine while others will move about as witnesses among the Gentile nations. Of this believing remnant during the end of the age

our Lord speaks next in verses 9-28. On account of their faith and their witness they will suffer persecution. Many false prophets will arise and they must endure to the end of the seven years, the close of the age, in order to be saved (not a spiritual, but an earthly salvation) to enter the kingdom, which comes with the King's return. They will be His witnesses among all the nations, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, which is, the heralding of the coming of the King, calling upon the nations to repent. There will then be great tribulation, in the land, and throughout the world. Antichrist will reign in his satanic power for 1260 days, or three years and a half, as revealed in Daniel and Revelation. Politically, commercially and religiously confusion will reign. When this period of time has ended "immediately after the tribulation," the Lord predicts *He will come again in great power and glory in the clouds of heaven*. The only way to interpret the words He spoke is the literal interpretation. It does not mean a spiritual coming, but a literal coming.

The age will end as predicted; there will be a great tribulation and after its force is spent Christ will come back to earth again. All kinds of false teachings have been connected with the plain statements of our Lord. One Pastor Charles T. Russell deceived many by his invention that Christ came back in a secret manner in 1874, and that He would be publicly revealed in 1914. Others deny that there ever will be a great tribulation, like a recent voluminous writer in his attempts to teach prophecy. He follows the same argument of nearly all commentators, that the words of our Lord were fulfilled in the past when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies of Titus. But the theory that our Lord speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that His coming in the clouds of heaven in great power and glory happened

in connection with that event is unscriptural. The words of our Lord which follow are the conclusive evidence.

“And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (verse 31). Did this take place when Jerusalem was destroyed? Who are the elect? This word is found in the Synoptics seven times. In the Epistles it is used nine times. As used in the Gospels it never means the Church of Jesus Christ, but His people Israel; as used in the Epistles the word “elect” never means the people Israel, but always the Church. This is a valuable fact. We ask, when Jerusalem was destroyed did the Lord come and send His angels to gather the people Israel together from their world-wide dispersion? No! They were scattered as a result among all the nations of the world. This in itself is proof that our Lord speaks of His future coming. Others are so elementary in their exegesis that they identify the gathering of the elect by angels with the home gathering of the Church as prophesied in 1 Thess. iv:16-18. As if there could be any kind of correspondency between Matt. xxiv:31 and that passage.

The mentioning of the fig tree fully confirms the truth of what we have stated. The fig tree is emblematic of Israel. The cursing of the fig tree and the subsequent withered condition is symbolically Israel during this age. But the fig tree is to put forth new leaves. The Jewish hope is not dead. It died when Jerusalem was destroyed, but it will be revived immediately before the age ends and the Lord returns.

But someone will probably point to verse 34, *“This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled.”* The word “generation” has been made to mean that very generation living then. Therefore, it is claimed, the Lord taught

His return to take place within their life time. But the Greek word "*Genea*" has the meaning of "*a race of people.*" It is used in this sense in Luke xvi:8 and elsewhere in the New Testament. "This generation" means the race which sprung from Abraham, God's chosen earthly people. Well have they been called "the everlasting nation."

Care must also be taken with interpreting verses 40 and 41. The one who is taken, when the Lord comes in visible glory, is taken in judgment, the one who is left, is left to have a share in the earthly kingdom. It is different, as we point out later, when the Lord comes for His Church. Then some will be taken to be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and others will be left to pass through the great tribulation and face the day of wrath.

II. We give a brief word on the three parables which follow. The first parable is the one which describes the faithful and the evil servant. The faithful and wise servant reckons with the fact that his Lord is coming some day and therefore he gives meat in due season to the household. Having done this and acted faithfully, the Lord calls him blessed. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods." The evil servant says "my lord delayeth his coming." This leads to his outrageous actions. Then the lord comes in a day when the evil servant does not look for him at all and punishes him for his evil deeds. Anyone can trace in this parable the prevailing religious conditions of this age, past, present and future. Had the Church always believed that the Lord is coming back, ecclesiastical conditions would have been far different from what they have been. But nearly all Christendom either denies the fact of His coming, or puts it into the remote future, thus saying "my Lord delays His coming."

The second parable, the parable of the ten virgins, pictures similar conditions. The ten virgins are typical of professing Christendom. The wise virgins who have oil, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, represent true believers; the foolish virgins who have lamps only, but no oil, represent those who have the outward form of godliness, but are destitute of the reality, for they are unsaved Church members. In the beginning of the Church all waited for the coming of the Bridegroom. But as He tarried the blessed hope was given up, and for many centuries nothing was heard of the return of Christ. The midnight cry was sounded (as it is now) and while the wise virgins, true believers, trimmed their lamps and the foolish virgins tried to obtain oil, the Bridegroom came. Those who were ready entered in to be with Him; the others faced a closed door.

The parable of the talents is the third parable. Two used the talents they had received; one did not use his talent. Those who were faithful were rewarded and the unfaithful one was punished. It will be seen that each parable is teaching the return of the Lord, rewarding those who are faithful and punishing the unfaithful. Without belief in the coming of the Lord these parables are meaningless.

III. The third section of the discourse is not a parable, but a prophecy. It is generally called "the parable of the sheep and the goats." But our Lord does not say it is a parable. It is a prophecy, revealing His judgment work after His return, when He takes the throne of His glory, not in heaven but on earth. The Father's throne which the glorified Son of Man occupies during the present age, is in heaven; the throne of the Son of Man will be established on and over the earth; it is the throne of His glory. This judgment is generally called the universal judgment at the end of the world. The Scriptures do not teach a universal

judgment. There is a judgment of the righteous, as there is a resurrection of the just; there is a judgment of the wicked dead, as there is a second resurrection unto damnation. But neither one of these judgments or resurrections is taught in Matthew xxv:31-46. Nothing is said about a resurrection. The judgment concerns living nations. Some are put on His right hand; others on His left. The standard of judgment is what the nations have done, or have not done, to His brethren. His brethren are not the members of His body, but His brethren according to the flesh, Jews. He sent forth these Jewish messengers during the end of the age. They preached the Gospel of the Kingdom (verse 14). Some of the nations believed and while the judgments of the Lord were in the earth they learned righteousness (Is. xxvi:9) and expressed their righteousness in doing good to these messengers. Other nations did not accept this final call of the mercy of God; they mistreated the messengers and did not show them kindness. They will be put on the left and pass away as nations from the earth, while the nations which believed and learned righteousness will remain on earth to enter the prepared kingdom.

Only one more passage in Matthew mentions His return.

Chapter xxvi:64 "Jesus saith unto him, *Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*" It is a solemn passage. The high priest had said to his prisoner, the Lord Jesus Christ; "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Then He answered in the words which we have quoted. In them He confirms His Deity, predicts His exaltation to the right hand of God, and His visible return in the clouds of heaven. Upon this true witness He was judged guilty of death. When He spoke of His return "in

the clouds of heaven" the Jewish officials knew that He claimed to be the One whom Daniel saw in his night vision, who receives from the hands of God the kingdom, whom all nations and languages are to serve (Dan. vii:14).

The Gospel of Mark

There are not many passages in the Gospel of Mark which mention His return. We mention those which are not found in Matthew.

Chapter viii:38 "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." This is also quoted by Luke in the ninth chapter. Mark and Luke record the transfiguration and link with it the words of the Lord that some would not taste death till they see the kingdom of God (Mark ix:1; Luke ix:26). The Olivet prophetic discourse is reported by Mark only in part; the parables of Matthew, and the description of the judgment of nations are omitted. But there is something in Mark which neither Matthew nor Luke mention.

Chapter xiii:34-37 "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left His house, and gave authority to His servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." The far journey is His return to the Father. He left His house, the relationship with His covenant people Israel. He also gave authority to His servants, His apostles, and after His ascension, as the head of the body, He gave to every

one his work. The porter, who is commanded to watch, may be applied to the Holy Spirit, just as this word is used by our Lord in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John. Then He commanded them to watch. He is coming again, but the exact time is not revealed by Him. He told them before *"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is"* (Verse 32, 33). It is presumption to try to find out the exact time of His return. Setting the time of His second coming has been in the past a popular delusion, and it is still being indulged in, in spite of the miserable failures of fanatics. Seventh Day Adventism with its perverted Gospel and prophetic teaching, started with Miller and the false prophetess Mrs. White, who prophesied the day of His coming. So did Russell of the Millennial Dawn delusion (International Bible Student Association). Then there was Mr. M. Baxter, founder of the "Prophetic News," who published his "Forty Coming Wonders" in which he fixed the dates for all coming prophetic events. When the time arrived and nothing happened, he invented new dates, and published a new edition. Then there are smaller pamphlets written by Mr. Baker, W. B. Blackstone and others, which attempt to figure out the time of His coming. All date and day setting is unscriptural, and the believer does well to ignore all attempts to ascertain the time of His coming, for it is unrevealed.

The Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of Luke presents our Lord as the perfect man. The Holy Spirit gives in this account, written by the beloved physician, the details of His entrance into His earthly life by the Virgin-birth. The Modernist, who denies this great

foundation rock of the Gospel, charges that two of the Gospel records (Mark and John) have not a word about the Virgin-birth; Matthew speaks of it and only Luke gives a full account of Mary of Nazareth, the angel's visit and his heaven sent message. On account of the silence of the other Evangelists they reject the fact of the Virgin-birth as unreliable. It shows, like all other claims made by this rationalistic school, their blindness. Matthew was led to mention the bare fact that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit, because Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy, which is the genealogy of Joseph to whom Mary was espoused. To show that Joseph was not the father of our Lord, Matthew mentions the fact of the Virgin-birth. Inasmuch as Luke wrote of Him as the second Man, the perfect Man, the Spirit of God gave through his pen the full facts of the Virgin-birth. Mark did not write about this, because he draws the picture of the perfect servant, and John was led to write of His Deity and the eternal life, and there was no need to restate what Luke's Gospel contains.

We quote the message of the angel Gabriel, *Chapter i:31-33* "*And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.*" How literally the first part of this announcement has been fulfilled is well known. The second part, relating to the throne of David, His reign over the house of Jacob and His kingdom, is generally declared to be a spiritual throne of David in heaven, and a spiritual reign, and a spiritual kingdom. When God made a covenant with David He did not promise him a spiritual throne in heaven, nor a spiritual kingdom, but an earthly throne and an earthly

kingdom. The return of our Lord, the Son of Man and the Son of David, will bring the realization of the promised throne and the promised kingdom.

The three songs of praise which follow in the Gospel of Luke, the *Magnificat* of the Virgin, the praise of Zechariah and the adoration of Simeon in the temple, have a prophetic strain looking forward to the consummation, when the King receives His throne.

Chapter xii:35-40 "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning: and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return on account of the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down at meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." It is obvious that He speaks of His second coming. He exhorts His own to wait for that event with girded loins and shining lights. He comes on account, or, for the wedding (the correct rendering). He will come suddenly and His watching servants are to be rewarded. He will come forth and gird Himself, as when He washed the disciples' feet, and serve them. What service that will be when He has His redeemed with Him, we do not know. He speaks of the second and third watches only, and not of the first and the fourth. In Matthew xiv we have a hint that He will come in the fourth watch.

Peter spoke asking "Lord speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" He answered him with a parable of the faithful and unfaithful servant (verses 42-48) it is the same parable as recorded in Matt. xxiv with something added as to the future punishment (verses 47, 48).

Chapter xvii:24-37. In this passage He speaks of His future coming once more "*For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven: so shall also the Son of man be in His day.*" The present age is "man's day," when He comes again His day will begin. That day will come suddenly. Then He mentions what precedes His return, "But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation."

What is recorded by Matthew is also stated by Luke with some additions. "*And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*"

He does not speak of righteousness and peace reigning on earth when He comes, but His day, the day of His visible manifestation, will be preceded by the days of Noah and Lot, that is, the same moral conditions will prevail on earth. The days of Noah were days of violence; the days of Lot were days of immorality. The common affairs of the race in commerce, agriculture and in social life continued till sudden judgment came. Thus it will be before He comes again. Violence, immorality and other forms of unrighteousness and lawless-

ness will increase and culminate in the great tribulation. He does not find a converted world when He returns. Both the deluge and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are typical of the judgment which falls upon the ungodly when He comes back; and as Noah and his house were saved, and Lot escaped, so will the righteous be delivered.

Chapter xviii:8 “*Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?*” This was spoken after the parable of the unjust judge (verses 1-7). The widow is the remnant of Israel sorely pressed during the days of tribulation. They cry, at that time, as His own elect, night and day unto Him (verse 7). His answer will be His visible manifestation by which they will be delivered. But when He comes He will not find the faith, that is the faith revealed in His Holy Word, on the earth. The Spirit of God in the Epistles gives the complete revelation as to what He will find when He returns.

Chapter xix:11-27. This passage contains the parable of the ten pounds. It was occasioned by those who thought “that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear.” They recognized in Him the promised Messiah, the King, but did not realize that the cross and the suffering had to precede the glory. He speaks of Himself as going to a far country to receive a kingdom, *and to return*. In the interval His servants are to be faithful with the entrusted pounds; He tells them “*Occupy till I come.*” The ten servants like the ten virgins, represent Christendom. The one who hides the pound in the sweat cloth (*soudarion*) is called a wicked servant, and represents unsaved, professing Christians. The citizens mentioned in verse 14, who hated the nobleman, are the Jews. The parable teaches that when the Lord returns He will reward His faithful servants and will give them a share in His Kingdom.

The Olivet discourse is given in part by Luke in the twenty first chapter. We do not repeat what has already been stated in Matthew's account, *Chapter xxi:20-24*. This passage predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the world-wide dispersion of the Jewish people. We quote the last verse. "*And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*" Jerusalem will not always be trodden down by the Gentiles. Redemption and glory is everywhere promised in the prophetic Word of the Old Testament to Jerusalem. But the accomplishment of these promises is everywhere linked with the coming of the once rejected King. There will be no restoration of Israel, no glory for Jerusalem, till Christ comes back. The times of the Gentiles will end. Their end is the end of the age and that comes with His return. How long do the times of the Gentiles last? When will they end? Nobody knows. We know when they began, but the duration of these times is unrevealed.

Verses 25-28 "And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring: Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

Between verse 24 and 25 comes in the present age. When the age ends times of distress and perplexity will come, heaven and earth will be shaken before the Son of man appears in a cloud with power and great glory. *Verses 34-36* contain words of warning and exhortation in view of the fact

of His coming. While these words mean primarily those who wait for His visible coming to the earth, they also have an application to His Church waiting to meet Him in the air.

The Gospel of John

The striking difference between the Synoptics and the fourth Gospel, the Gospel of John, is known to every thoughtful Christian. Without enlarging upon these differences we call attention to the total absence in this Gospel of all the prophetic announcements of His return, which we have found so frequently in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Nothing is found in this Gospel about the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70, for the simple reason that the Gospel of John was written at least 20 years after that event. Nor is there found a single word of the Olivet discourse. Not once does our Lord refer to the great tribulation. Once He speaks of Antichrist, the false Messiah, but without any further teaching as to the end of the age. (John v:43). The Spirit of God guided the hand of the beloved disciple to omit all these statements, not to pen anything about the characteristics of the age, the wars, the rumors of war, the famines, the pestilences or earthquakes. Nor did John record the repeated declarations our blessed Lord made, that He would come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Nothing is said of the regathering of Israel, the budding fig tree. In vain do we look for the kingdom parables with their great dispensational messages.

Why is it thus? The purpose of the Gospel of John furnishes the answer. It is the Gospel which reveals Christ as the Son of God, with the assurance that those who believe on Him have life, eternal life, through His name. What

this eternal life is, in what it consists, what it includes, and how it is sustained and manifested, is all blessedly unfolded in the fourth Gospel.

His disciples, except Judas, who betrayed Him, had believed on Him; they were therefore born again and had received in the new birth eternal life. In His high priestly prayer (John xvii) He speaks of them as being not of the world even as He is not of the world. By believing on Him they belonged to Him, were separated from the world, which lieth in the wicked one; their lot and portion was no longer with the world, for they had passed from death unto life, no longer the subjects of judgment but destined to eternal glory. While in the Synoptics they represent prophetically the believing Jewish remnant in the end of the age, in the Gospel of John they represent not the nucleus of an earthly, literal kingdom, but the nucleus of the Church. According to the eternal purpose they were members of that body already, soon to be baptized by the coming of the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, the Church.

Because they are the representatives, prophetically, in Matthew, Mark and Luke of believing Jews of the end of the age, these Gospels record His sayings as to the tribulation, the abomination of desolation, the persecutions, the false Christs, His visible coming, and the signs of His coming and the regathering of Israel. But inasmuch as they are seen in John's Gospel as identified with Him, no longer of this world, but brought into a new and heavenly relationship, His second visible coming, the preceding events, the signs of His coming, the end of the age, the tribulation and the regathering of Israel, as well as other events are not mentioned in this Gospel.

And why not? Because the Church of Jesus Christ, composed of all true believers, born again, not of the world as

He is not of the world, identified with Him, will not be on the earth during the end of the age, will not pass through the tribulation of those days, has nothing to do with the "abomination of desolation" and will not see Him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This great and comforting truth, that those who belong to Christ and constitute His body, will not be on earth during the great tribulation, but have a better hope, is, for the first time, brought out in the Gospel of John. When we examine the teaching of the Epistles as to the return of our Lord, we shall discover the full meaning of that blessed hope, which is stated by our Lord in the Gospel of John.

And now we are ready to quote and explain the one, and only one passage, in this Gospel in which the coming again of our Lord is directly and most blessedly promised by Himself.

Chapter xiv:1-3 "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, ye may be also." This is a unique promise. No such promise is recorded in the preceding Gospels, nor is there anything like it written in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah indicated that God had something very blessed in reserve for those who would see the days of the Messiah. "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him" (Isaiah lxiv:4). This is quoted in the New Testament (1 Cor. ii:9) and there we read "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." Here then is a new revelation.

Let us remember once more that the eleven were Jews by nature. What was their hope? They believed in, and expected, the coming of the Messiah, the Son of David. Their hope was an earthly hope. They expected to be with Him in His earthly kingdom. The mother of the sons of Zebedee requested that her sons might occupy places at His right hand and at His left in His reign. To be in Jerusalem, the capital of the coming kingdom, to have share in that kingdom, was the highest hope of the believing Jew. And these disciples expected nothing else. They could not expect a higher calling and a more glorious destiny, for Old Testament revelation is silent on such a higher destiny.

They were greatly troubled. He had said to them "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me, and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you." Before that He had announced His betrayal by one of their number. Then Judas having "received the sop went immediately out; and it was night." They did not know what it all meant. What would become of their Jewish hope, if He leaves them alone? Can there be a kingdom without the presence of the King? Then came His soothing words "Let not your heart be troubled," followed by the most blessed statements. He speaks of the Father's house, not of a place on earth, in Jerusalem or the kingdom, but in heaven where the Father dwelleth. He tells them that He goes there to prepare a place for them. They expected He would prepare a place for them in Jerusalem. Then comes the assurance, with which they had become familiar from what He had said at other occasions: "I will come again." What followed was altogether new to them: "*and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there*

ye may be also." They heard from His lips that He would leave them, that His destination would be the Father's house, there He would prepare a place for them; in due time He would come back, receive them unto Himself, and make them the sharers of His place in the Father's house. How perplexed they must have been. They did not realize what it all meant. They still clung to their Jewish hope, but after the Holy Spirit came they understood the better hope of a better inheritance. Thus Peter wrote to his brethren in the dispersion, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved for you in heaven" (1 Peter 1:2,3). When Christ expired on the cross their Jewish hope died; when He was raised from among the dead and received up into glory, they were begotten again unto a living hope, and then realized that their inheritance is heavenly, with Him in everlasting glory.

The word of our Lord in the fourteenth chapter of John is the first time the blessed hope is mentioned, something entirely different, as we have shown, from the Jewish hope of an earthly kingdom. We shall find the full revelation as to this hope in the different Epistles. How near and dear this hope, to have His own with Himself in the Father's house, is to His own loving heart, may be learned from His great prayer. There He prayed the Father for that, which some future day, will be gloriously answered. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." (John xvii:24).

There is another passage in John in which our Lord mentions His coming indirectly. He had announced, at the shore of Tiberias, Peter's destiny. Then Peter asked concerning the destiny of John. In answer the Lord said "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." (xxi:21,22). But our Lord did not say that John should not die.

Our Lord probably indicated that John should tarry longer than the other Apostles, and as a very old man, as a prisoner in Patmos, should behold the great events in the "Revelation of Jesus Christ" connected with His coming for the Church, and His coming in power and glory for judgment and the establishment of His reign over the earth.

CHAPTER III

THE RETURN OF THE LORD IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles records the beginning of the Church by the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and how the Gospel witness was given to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the Gentiles.

The first chapter gives the account of the Lord's ascension. For forty days He had shown Himself alive by many infallible proofs, and spoke to them of the things of the kingdom. At their last meeting, when He was about to be taken up from them, they asked Him a question. "*Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*" The Jewish hope still dominated their thinking. But what was His answer? He did not reprove them for their carnal expectations, nor did He say that they were mistaken that another kingdom is coming, and that there will be no kingdom restored to Israel. If He had said this He would have contradicted the testimony of all the prophets in the Old Testament. "*And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.*" The kingdom will surely be restored to Israel. It will be restored with His return. What He had said before, that the time of His return is known to the Father only, He re-states here. How well it would have been if Christians had heeded these words of our Lord. The attempts to find out the time of His return have always been disastrous and have led to the discrediting of the prophetic Word.

Then He ascended on high. They saw Him ascending. What a sight it must have been when He was received up into glory. Then a cloud took Him in.

It was not a common cloud, but the shekinah-glory-cloud, the garment which He so often used in the theophanies of olden times. The disciples stood there, evidently unable to take their eyes off the spot where He had disappeared. Were they so steadfastly gazing because they expected His return there and then? Two men in white apparel arrested their attention.

They said "*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven*" (Acts 1:11). The return in like manner with a cloud, and a literal return to the very spot from which He left, the Mount of Olives, must not be confounded (as it is often done) with the blessed hope. The coming promised here is His visible coming as revealed in the prophets and re-stated by Him in the Synoptics. The words spoken by these two men in white apparel confirm therefore His own words, as well as the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is not the coming for His Saints, but the coming with His Saints. See Zechariah xiv.

We do not find the return of our Lord mentioned in the words spoken by Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost. He witnessed to Christ crucified, buried, risen and ascended, seated at the right hand of God, demonstrated by the presence of the Holy Spirit, who had come from heaven to earth. But the better hope must have been brought to the hearts of all who believed and trusted on Christ. We read "*And all that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need*" (Acts ii:44,45).

They were all Jews. The Jew clings tenaciously to the material things and expects the blessing of God to be ex-

pressed in the increase of houses and lands. But here are Jews who gladly give up earthly things. They realized the better hope, the better inheritance, which the Spirit of God reveals more fully in the Epistles.

Chapter iii:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." The lame man at the temple gate had been miraculously healed, and Peter delivered to the gathered multitude his second address. After bearing witness to the Person of Christ, that He was delivered by them into the hands of the Gentiles and that they had killed the Prince of life, whom God had raised from the dead, he called upon them to repent. Once more God spoke in mercy to Jerusalem to accept Him as their promised Messiah-King whom they had crucified.

Peter declares that, if they turn to Him and repent of their evil deed, their sins would be blotted out and as a result the times of refreshing would come from the presence of the Lord. Then the important statement is made that He, whom the heavens received, who had gone back to the Father, would be sent again. His coming again will result in the times of refreshing and the restitution of all things as promised by God's holy prophets. The restitution of all things, or restoration, means the restored kingdom and all the blessings and glories which go along with it, according to the prophetic Word. They did not repent. The offer of mercy was rejected. But when the age ends a remnant of the same people will turn to the Lord and re-

pent, and the promises made unto their fathers by the prophets will be accomplished.

Chapter xv:13-18 "And after they held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world."

This great prophetic utterance was made during the first general church council and contains the important program of God concerning the work of the present age, and what will follow when it ends with the return of the Lord. 1. God visits the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. This is the great purpose of the present age. The Gospel is preached in all the world and through this preaching and the power of the Holy Spirit the gathering of the Church, the out-called company (the meaning of the Greek word *ecclesia*) takes place. This work must end some day and the body of Christ is then complete. 2. "After this I will return." This is the testimony of all the prophets, a second advent. Christ comes back when the purpose of this age is realized. 3. The tabernacle of David will be built again, that is, the throne of David will be established, the kingdom will be restored to Israel. 4. Then all the Gentiles will seek after the Lord. This is world-conversion. The program ignored leads to confusion; the present day condition of Christendom bears witness to it.

Apostolic preaching included the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We learn this from Paul's visit to Thessalonica. Paul spent a short time in that city, and preaching the Gospel an assembly was formed. From his first Epistle to the Thessalonians we learn that they waited "for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i:10). How could they wait for His return if Paul had not taught them this great Bible doctrine? We also learn from the second Epistle to the same Church that he had taught them orally the coming events in connection with His return. (See 2 Thess. ii:5). When opposition arose against the Thessalonians in their city, the Jews, with the town rabble, accused them that they do "contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, even Jesus." By inference we gather from this that Paul had taught them the coming of the King (Acts xvii:7).

Chapter xvii:31 "Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." Paul in speaking thus did not teach a universal judgment at the end of the world, but the setting up of a righteous government, vested in Him whom He raised from the dead.

CHAPTER IV

THE RETURN OF THE LORD IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

The Epistle to the Romans

The message of the Epistle to the Romans is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the salvation which God has provided in the sacrificial death of His Son. This salvation is threefold, from the guilt of sin, from the power of sin and from the presence of sin.

Chapter v:1, 2 "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Three things accompany justification by faith. The first is peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That peace was made in the blood of the cross; the believer enters into it by faith in Christ. There is a present blessing in that the justified believer has access by faith into this grace wherein he stands; then there is something which is future. It is the glory of God. This promised glory is the object of hope. In this hope of the glory of God, the believer rejoices at the present time; it enables him to glory, even in tribulation. What is the hope of the glory of God? It would be a very vague hope if Scripture did not define it. But Scripture tells us what it is. The hope of the glory of God, which is revealed in the Gospel, is to be like the risen Son of God, to share His inheritance and to be forever with the Lord. Other Epistles reveal this fully. But this hope of the glory of God is dependent on His return. If He does not return there will be no such glory for the child of God. His coming again will bring His own to the Father's house and into the possession of all the promised glory.

In the eighth chapter we reach the summit of this Epistle and the salvation of God. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The guilt and condemnation of our sins are forever gone; the believer is freed from the law of sin and death; sin has no more dominion over him. In this chapter we read of the future redemption, the salvation from the presence of sin, and of the glory of God, for which we wait. The body of the believer has the promise of redemption. This we learn from the eleventh verse of this chapter, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." As we have shown in our work on the "Healing Question" is it not a promise that the believer's body is to be immune from pain and sickness, but the passage teaches the future redemption of the believer's body either by resurrection, or by the sudden change when the Lord comes (1 Cor. *xvi:51*).

The Apostle speaks next of the fact that believers are the children of God "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." But when does this glorification take place, when does the believer receive his inheritance, when does he begin to be the joint-heir with Christ? Certainly not at death. Death in the New Testament is branded as an enemy. Nowhere in the Scriptures is the promise of glory and the glorification of the believer's body linked with death, though it is true that to "depart and to be with Christ, is far better." The glory of joint heirship with Christ does not come till Christ comes again.

Chapter vii:18-25 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the

creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we are saved in hope; but hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." This is a mighty revelation of the future glory. Paul teaches that the present time of suffering will be followed by glory which will be revealed. Then he speaks of creation and the creature. The creature suffered on account of man's sin; his fall dragged down creation; it is now subject to vanity. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together till now. But will this be the permanent condition of creation? Is it hopeless? If it were God would suffer defeat; He would be a defeated God. Full redemption demands the removal of the blight and the curse which rests now upon creation. Groaning creation will cease its groans. For that time of deliverance creation is waiting with earnest, longing expectation. The divine promise is that "the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." It will come with "the manifestation of the sons of God" (verse 19). But the manifestation of the sons of God does not take place apart from His manifestation (Col. iii:4). And Christ is not manifested in a spiritual way, but His manifestation, His Appearing means in Scripture His personal return in glory.

For this all creation is groaning and waiting. For this we wait, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, the members of His body, we wait for the promised redemption of the body, when we shall be like Him and see Him as He is.

Chapter viii:29, 30 "For whom He did foreknow, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called, them He also justified, them He also glorified." This precious chain leads from eternity to eternity. He foreknew and predestinated those who believe. He redeemed them by His Son, calling, justifying and glorifying them. All foreknown and predestinated are to be conformed to the image of His Son. He is the firstborn among many brethren, bringing many sons unto glory, (Heb. ii:10). But all is inseparably connected with His return.

Chapter xi:25-27 "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery: that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion a Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." This chapter in Romans contains a great dispensational message, showing that God hath not cast away His earthly people Israel, and that the present-day blindness is neither permanent nor total.* There is a hope of Israel, as there is a hope of the Church, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the hope for both, His earthly and His heavenly people. In the passage we have quoted, Paul makes known a mystery. Blindness in part has happened to Israel, but that blindness has a limitation. It will be removed when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in. As stated before, during the present

*See our book, "The Jewish Question," price 75 cents.

age there is a world-wide preaching of the Gospel for the gathering of the true Church. When the full number is reached, the fulness of the Gentiles will have come in, the true Church will be united to the Lord Jesus in glory. Then all Israel will be saved. It does not mean all Israel in the sense as taught by Russellism and other cults, that those who died in their sins will have another chance, but it means all those of Israel living in that day, who wait for Him, a believing remnant, as made known in different portions of the prophets. Their salvation will be accomplished by the coming of the Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ. His return will result in the salvation and restoration of the remnant of Israel. Then all the covenant blessings will be realized, (See Isa. lix:20, 21 and Zech. xii:10). Apart from the coming of the Lord there is no hope for Israel.

Chapter xiv:10 "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*" Our Lord said "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son" (John v:22). Here for the first time we read of the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment of which He speaks in Matt. xxv:31 is the judgment which he executes as the Son of Man, when He occupies the throne of His glory. The passage in Romans and others in the Epistles to the Corinthians do not speak of a judgment throne, but of a judgment seat. The judgment seat (*Bema*) is for His people; their works and service will be judged; some will be approved and others will be disapproved; some will receive a reward and others will receive none. The question of eternal salvation is not connected with the judgment seat of Christ, for eternal salva-

tion is received and assured by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But does the believer when he dies appear immediately before the judgment seat of Christ, or is the judgment seat in the future? The Apostle Paul answers this question. "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me *at that day*; and not to me only but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. iv:8). That day, is the day of His appearing. Apart from His appearing there can be no judgment seat of Christ and no promised rewards.

The First Epistle to the Corinthians

The state of the Corinthian church is learned from this Epistle. They were carnal, worldly minded, they envied and had strife and divisions among themselves. (1 Cor. iii:3). They tolerated in their midst the grossest immoralities (1 Cor. v). The Spirit of God had to warn them to beware of fornication, which was so prevalent in Corinth. There were other evils also. The Apostle calls therefore their attention to the judgment seat of Christ, and speaks of it twice in the first Epistle and once in the second.

Chapter iii:10-15 "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Without giving a full exposition of these verses we state briefly that the day which the Apostle mentions is the day of Christ,

when He will judge His people. The fire of that day, the symbol of His holiness and righteousness, will consume all that is not of Him; then every man's work will be tried. The believer's foundation is Christ.

Every one who rests upon this one foundation is saved forever. But the believer is to build upon this foundation. Some build upon it the things which are precious; others build nothing but wood, hay and stubble. Some will receive a reward; others will see everything burned up, while they themselves are saved as by fire.

Chapter iv:5 "Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God." This passage also refers us to the day of Christ and His judgment seat. The hidden things of darkness will then be brought to light, the counsels of the hearts will be laid bare. The spiritually minded believer does not need to vindicate himself when misunderstood or misjudged; he can afford to wait till the Lord comes. Then in His presence every wrong will be righted and He will praise those who have done well.

Chapter vi:2,3 "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?..... Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"

The Apostle reprov'd them for going before a heathen judge to have their grievances among themselves adjusted. He reminds them of their coming and promised glory. They are destined, with all other believers, to judge the world and even angels. But the judgment of the world, the nations and the angels in which believers participate, does not take place till He is manifested.

Chapter xi:26 "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death, till He come." The

Apostle of the Gentiles was not in the upper room when our Lord instituted the memorial feast. The Lord therefore revealed it unto Him with the command to deliver this blessed ordinance to the Church. "For I have received it of the Lord, that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood. This do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." Whatever else Christendom has made out of the Lord's supper is unscriptural. The memorial feast is only for true believers. As they gather on the Lord's day at His table they remember His death, that He died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that He is risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of God as priest and advocate and that He is coming again. Till He come we break the bread and take the cup, and when He comes again the blessed feast of remembrance passes away, for we shall see Him face to face. God's people in the Old Testament had altars upon which sacrifices were brought. At these altars the Jewish believer looked back to the time when sin entered in, and looked forward to the coming of the better sacrifice and the better blood. In the New Testament the believer has a table; he looks back to the cross, where the Lamb of God died, the true sacrifice was brought; he looks forward to the promised coming again and the promised glory.

Chapter xv:22-25 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have

delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

In the great resurrection chapter we find this definite witness to the second coming of our Lord. Christ arose first from among the dead; He is called the first fruits; then comes the resurrection of those that are Christ's at His coming. Here as elsewhere the truth is revealed, that the believer's body will be raised from the grave. This is the first resurrection. It will take place at His coming. Some teach that not all believers will be raised when He comes for His saints; they claim that only a certain class will participate in the rapture, composed of those who have lived a consecrated life, and who attained a deeper experience or higher life, etc.

All these fanciful inventions are scattered by the statement "they that are Christ's at His coming." All who belong to Christ will be raised to glory. The weakest believer, the most ignorant and the youngest child of God is included, for it is not the matter of attainment, but of grace. Then after His coming, Christ will reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

Chapter xv:51-53 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trump shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

This is one of the mysteries made known by the Apostle Paul. A "mystery" in the Word of God is a truth which was not made known before. The Apostle Paul was the instrument through whom the great mysteries of God not

known in former ages have been revealed. In Romans xi:25 is revealed the mystery of Israel's blindness and its limitation. In Ephesians the mystery of the Church, as the body and bride of Christ, is revealed; and in 1 Cor. xv: 51-53 and 1 Thess. iv:14-17 the translation of those who live at the close of the age. Inasmuch as 1 Thess. iv: 14-18 was written before 1 Cor. xv:51-53, the latter passage is supplementary to that great revelation given through Paul in the first Epistle he penned by the Spirit of God. The mystery here is that there will be a generation of believers living who will not sleep,* that is, pass through death. They will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye and not pass through the grave. This will be at the last trump, which is not the seventh trump of the book of Revelation. At the same time the dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible. Let it be noticed that the Apostle does not say "and they shall be changed," but "*we* shall be changed." Our comment on 1 Thess. iv:14-18 deals with this blessed hope more fully.

Chapter xvi:22 "*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha.*" The words "Anathema Maran-atha" mean "Accursed the Lord cometh." This is a solemn word. It shows that when the Lord returns, He will deal in judgment with the Christ rejectors. (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians

Chapter i:14 "*As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.*" The day of the Lord Jesus, the day of Christ, is the day when His redeemed are gathered in His presence.

*Sleep here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, means physical death. Scripture knows nothing whatever of the sleep of the soul.

This day is an exclusively New Testament revelation. The day of the Lord (*Yom Jehovah*), many times mentioned by the prophets, is the day of His visible manifestation, when He comes to deliver the remnant of His earthly people, deals in judgment with their enemies and receives the throne of His father David, to be the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The day of Christ concerns only the Saints of God, the day of the Lord concerns Israel and the nations. The day of Christ is ushered in by the rapture of the Saints, the fulfillment of 1 Cor. xv:51-53 and 1 Thess. iv:14-18; the day of the Lord is ushered in by His return in the cloud with power and great glory. Paul looked forward to the day of the Lord Jesus as a day of rejoicing. (See 1 Thess. ii:19).

Chapter v:1-5 "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." This passage is also closely related to 1 Cor. xi:51-53 and 1 Thess. iv:14-18. The believer knows that he possesses a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. While he is clothed with an earthly, frail tabernacle, this physical body of our humiliation, he groans and desires earnestly to be clothed upon with the house from heaven. He groans not to be unclothed, which means, to fall asleep and have the body put into a grave, but he groans for something better, to be clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. To be clothed upon means not to pass through death, but to be "changed in a moment, in

the twinkling of an eye." The coming of the Lord will bring this about.

Chapter v:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Once more the Apostle speaks of the award seat of Christ, when the believer's works will be judged.

The Epistle to the Galatians

This Epistle contains the inspired defense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Galatians were falling from grace by going back under the law. False teachers were at work among them, teaching the use of the law as a means of justification, and for a God-pleasing life and walk. In matchless divine logic it is proven "if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii:21). This perverted Gospel which the Galatians began to follow in the first century is also being taught and followed in the twentieth century. Ritualism is Galatianism. Seventh-Day Adventism is also a perverted system, which teaches a Gospel of works, Sabbath-keeping, and other evil doctrines.

The Holy Spirit does not speak of "that blessed Hope" in this Epistle; there is only a hint as to that hope. Ritualism does not know anything about the blessed hope. For a ritualist, who prays that the Lord may incline his heart to keep the law, who does not know the assurance of eternal salvation by simple trust in Christ, the coming of the Lord is the *Dies Irae*, the day of wrath, and to be dreaded. Instead of rejoicing that the Lord is coming again, the ritualist trembles at the thought of His coming. Nor does the Seventh Day Adventist know anything of the blessed hope; he perverts the prophetic Word in such a way which robs the

believer of the comfort of hope. The one passage in which the hope is mentioned is found in the fifth chapter.

Chapter v:4-5 “*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*” The Christian who falls from grace, goes back under the law, believes as does the Sabbath Day keeper, that only those can be saved who keep the Seventh Day, the Jewish Sabbath, has no hope; but the believer who rests on grace, who is justified by faith, “who worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly” (Rom. iv:5), waits for the hope of righteousness by faith, that is hope which the righteousness by faith has promised; it is “the hope of the glory of God” for which he waits (Rom. v:2).

The Epistle to the Ephesians

This portion of the Word of God contains God’s highest and best revelation. The masterpiece of God, the redemption of sinners, through Christ Jesus, is marvelously unfolded in this greatest of all the Pauline Epistles, (ii:10), the depths of which no Saint has ever fathomed. The glory of the body of Christ, the Church, which is His fulness, is the special revelation of this document. Each member of that body is seen fully indentified with Christ. They are quickened with Christ, risen with Christ and seated in Christ in the heavens, far above all principality and power and might and dominion. The destiny of that body is to be with Him, the glorified head. In the opening chapter the Apostle speaks of a coming dispensation, a future age.

Chapter i:9-11 “*Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of*

times He might gather together in one all things in the Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in Him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." The dispensation of the fulness of times follows the present dispensation; it will be the result of our Lord's return. During the present dispensation we see not yet all things put under His feet, but when He comes back all things will be gathered in the Christ. Christ and His body will be united in glory and all will be gathered together in one. It is the blessed consummation in the kingdom to come. This is the inheritance which the grace of God has given to the redeemed. But this dispensation of fulness will never dawn if there is no second coming of our Lord.

In verse fourteen of the same chapter Paul writes of "*the redemption of the purchased possession.*" The purchased possession is that which is in the heavenlies. In creation God gave to man the earth—"the earth has He given to the children of men" (Psalm cxv:16), but in redemption He gives the heavens and their glory. The heavenly spheres have also been contaminated by sin. Satan is still the prince of the power of the air; he has his abode there; his principalities and powers are in the heavenlies where the wicked spirits dwell (Eph. vi:12). That purchased possession will be redeemed by the power of God, when Christ comes again (See Rev. xii:7.12).

Chapter v:27 "*That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*" In this section of the Epistle Paul speaks more particularly of the Church as the bride of Christ. The family relation is used to illustrate this truth. Husbands are to love their wives, as Christ

loved the Church; wives are to submit themselves unto their husbands as a picture of how the Church is in submission to Christ. Three great facts as to Christ and the Church are brought to our attention. The first is past: "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." The second concerns the present: "that He might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." The third is future, (verse 27). He is to present the Church to Himself a glorious Church. But that presentation is not now, nor can it be, till He comes and takes the Church to Himself in glory.

The Epistle to the Philippians

This Epistle is not a doctrinal Epistle but is of a practical character. It shows what true Christian experience is. The day of Christ and His coming as the goal of Christian experience and as the Christian Hope are mentioned several times.

Chapter i:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He gives the assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ will not leave those who have accepted Him and in whom a good work is begun. The day of Jesus Christ as stated before, is His day in glory, when His own are gathered in His presence.

Chapter i:10 "That ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the Day of Christ." This is the second mention of the same day of glory, which can only come with His coming to receive His own unto Himself.

Chapter ii:16 "Holding forth the Word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." For the third time the day of Christ is before us. It is not without meaning that the Apostle in

this Epistle of true Christian experience refers thrice to the coming face to face meeting in the day of Christ. To live the life that pleases God means to live Christ. As revealed in this Epistle, He must be the object of our life (chapter i); the same mind which was in Him, must be in us; He is our pattern (chapter ii). To reach out constantly after the promised goal, the resurrection from among the dead, to prove worthy of the calling wherewith we are called, must be our daily ambition (chapter iii); to walk in faith and know that we can do all things through Christ will then be our daily experience (chapter iv). In such a devoted life the heart finds its greatest incentive to look forward to that day, when we shall see Him as He is.

Chapter iii:20 "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." The word "conversation" in the Greek is the word "*Politeuma*." From this word we have our English word "politics." One might translate "our citizenship, or politics, are in heaven." The true believer knows himself in Christ, and in Him, in the heavenlies. His gaze is upward. Christ in glory is His daily contemplation. He looks for Him from heaven. He expects Him as Saviour who will, when He comes, change the body of humiliation, the body in its earthly limitations, subject to pain, disease and death, and fashion it like unto His own glorious body. This is the believer's hope and daily comfort.

The Epistle to the Colossians

The Epistle to the Colossians is the companion Epistle to Ephesians. In it is revealed the glory of the Lord Jesus

Christ. His double headship in creation and in redemption is seen in the first chapter. By Him were all things created "and He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence" (i:16-18). After this we read of His atoning work and the double results of this work.

Chapter i:20-22 "And having made peace in the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled, in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouceable in His sight." The great work of redemption was accomplished by Him "in the blood of the cross." There is mentioned a double reconciliation. The reconciliation of believing sinners who were once alienated and enemies by wicked works; this is accomplished throughout this Gospel-age. The other reconciliation is future. It is the reconciliation of all things in earth and in heaven. This reconciliation is the same as "the restitution of all things" preached by Peter (Acts iii:19-21). This reconciliation and restitution is predicted in the Old Testament. It will be realized in the age to come, when righteousness reigns, peace dwells on earth, when groaning creation no longer groans under the curse. It is unattainable during the present age and can only be accomplished by His return, for He paid for this glorious reconciliation on the cross, and when He comes to reign all things will be restored to Edenic conditions. Does this reconciliation include the unsaved, the unregenerated, who reject Christ and die in their sins? Does it include Satan and the fallen angels? Some, who call themselves "Reconciliationists" or "Restitutionists" teach this; so does the cult of the "International Bible Student Association"

alias Russellism. The Scriptures do not teach such a universal reconciliation, which includes the wicked dead and the wicked spirits.

Chapter iii:1-4 “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”—Dead with Christ, risen with Christ, the believer’s life hid with Christ in God, these are the great cardinal truths of Christianity. If apprehended in faith they will lead the believer to seek the things which are above; the mind will be weaned away from the things which are on the earth. The things on the earth include what is mentioned in the previous chapter, such as the rudiments of the world, philosophy and words of vain deceit, legalism, ritualism, ordinances, as well as worldly ambitions, honors and pleasures. Then the Apostle speaks of the future. A day is coming when the life, now hid with Christ in God, will be fully manifested. “When Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory.” This manifestation of the redeemed comes when He is manifested, when He comes in power and great glory. The day “when He shall come to be glorified in His Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day” (2 Thess. i:10). It is not the day when He comes for His Saints, but the day of His visible and glorious return, the day in which He brings His many sons unto glory.

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians

This is the first Epistle the Apostle Paul wrote. It was written from Corinth about the year 52. In this Epistle we

find the great revelation as to the coming of the Lord to receive His Saints. Everything else in the Pauline Epistles, as to the coming of the Lord for His own, is connected with the revelation found in the fourth chapter of this Epistle. It seems the Epistle was mostly occasioned by the death of some of the Thessalonian believers; as they lacked more definite teaching as to the coming of the Lord and the first resurrection, they sorrowed like those who have no hope. To relieve their anxiety and uncertainty, and to give them the full light on the coming of the Lord in relation to those who are asleep and the future reunion with them, the Lord gave the unique and most blessed revelation as to this coming event.

In the first chapter we find a description of the Thessalonian church. They possessed real Christianity, and at the close of this chapter we find in what their experience and Christian life consisted.

Chapter 1:9,10 "For they, themselves, report concerning us what manner of entrance we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from among the dead, Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come."

Here are the three great essentials of true Christianity. A true conversion in turning to God from idols; a true service and life for God which attest the genuineness of conversion; and the third a hopeful waiting for His Son from heaven. To believe in the coming of the Lord and to wait for it is therefore a vital part of Christianity. A sad testimony it is to the superficial knowledge of the Gospel, when men say, and teach, that the belief in the second coming of Christ is inessential and has no practical value.

It is most essential and of the greatest value to the child of God. He is coming again, and with His coming He delivereth us from coming wrath.

Chapter ii:19,20 "For what is our hope, or crown of rejoicing. Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. For ye are our glory and joy." He reminds them, as he did remind the Philippians and the Corinthian believers, that there will be a day of Christ, when they would meet in His presence in glory. Those who were saved through the preaching of the servant of Christ, nourished and built up in their most holy faith, will be the crown of joy and glorying of the servant of Christ. He speaks of the Thessalonians as his glory and joy in the day of Christ.

Chapter iii:13 "To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His Saints." This is the third time Paul writes in this Epistle of the coming of the Lord. Here it is His visible manifestation, when He comes with all His Saints. In view of this coming manifestation in glory the Spirit of God urges to holiness, so as to be unblameable before Him.

Chapter iv:13-18 "But we do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are fallen asleep, to the end that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus.

"For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, shall not precede them who have fallen asleep; for the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout (literally: an assembling shout), with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living, who remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." This is the great and unique revelation to which we have referred

repeatedly in our previous pages. We remember here what our Lord said to the eleven disciples (John xiv:1-3). The details of this promise, to come again and to receive His own to Himself, remained unrevealed till the Apostle wrote this Epistle. Let us notice first the statement in verse 14 "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also God will bring with Him those that have fallen asleep through Jesus." The Apostle writes "Jesus died." Of the Saints it is written that they fall asleep; but never is it said that the Lord Jesus slept. He tasted death to the fullest as judgment upon sin. Those who have fallen asleep having believed on Christ will God bring with Him. It does not mean that He brings their disembodied spirits with Him to be united to their bodies from the graves, though this will be the case, but it means that those who have fallen asleep as to their physical bodies will God bring with His Son, when He comes with all His Saints, in that coming glorious manifestation. Their loved ones would be with Christ when He returns; and this assurance the sorrowing Thessalonians needed. But this assurance necessitated an additional revelation. How is it possible that they can come with Him? Are they coming as disembodied spirits? What about their bodies which were put into the graves? How shall they come with Him?

In answer to these questions we read first that those who passed away will not have an inferior place when He comes, and that, we, who remain to the time of His coming, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

Then follows the greatest of all revelations as to the manner of His coming. Nothing like it is found anywhere in the Old Testament. We know first of all that "the Lord Himself will descend from heaven." He is now at the right hand of God in His glorified humanity. When the last

member is added to His mystical body, the Church, when that body is complete, and the appointed time has come, He will leave the place at the right hand of the Father, and descend from heaven. He will not return to the earth at that time, but the air will be the meeting place, as we read later. When He comes with His Saints in His visible manifestation, He will descend to the earth. When He comes to gather His Saints, He descends with a shout, the shout of power and supreme authority. The Greek word "*Kelusma*" used means the shout of the hero to his followers in battle, by which they are gathered unto himself.

That shout may be that beautiful word "Come," the royal word of grace. There will also be the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. The archangel Michael is the leader of the heavenly hosts. All heaven will be in commotion when the heirs of glory, sinners saved by grace, are about to be brought, fully glorified, into the Father's house.

The trump of God has nothing to do with the judgment trumpets in Revelation, nor with the Jewish feast of trumpets. It is a purely symbolical term, and like the shout, denotes the fact of gathering. In Numbers x:4 we read "and if they blow with one trumpet, then the princes, the heads of the thousands in Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee." The shout and the trump of God will gather the fellow-heirs of Christ. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." All Saints of all ages, Old and New Testament Saints, are included. This statement disproves the erroneous belief held in the greater part of Christendom, as to a general resurrection. There is first a resurrection of the righteous, and from the Book of Revelation we learn, that there will be a second resurrection, in which the rest of the dead, the wicked dead, will be raised. The resurrection of the dead in Christ will be accomplished first when He descends into the air. What

power will then be manifested! Next all those who are living, at the time this shout is heard, will be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. It does not include the unsaved, professing church-members, but all who are Christ's are included. The change will take place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. xv:52). Then this mortal puts on immortality; it will be the being "clothed upon" of which the Apostle testifies in 2 Cor. v:1-5. It is then that our body of humiliation will be fashioned like unto His glorious body.

It will also bring the blessed reunion with our loved ones, who have gone before. Often the question is asked "shall we meet our loved ones again and shall we know them in glory?" The blessed revelation before us gives the only definite answer in all Scripture. "Together with them" tells us of both, reunion and recognition. We shall surely find our loved ones at that time and enter with them upon an eternal conscious and glorious fellowship. Those who deny this truth and revelation, that the Lord is coming for His Saints, rob themselves of all comfort and assurance as to those who have died in Christ. If the Lord Jesus Christ does not come back as revealed in this Scripture, there will be no resurrection and no reunion with our loved ones.

Then we read that the clouds will be heaven's chariots to take the joint heirs of Christ into His own presence at the appointed meeting place. "Caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air"; all laws of nature will be set aside, for it is the power of God. The same power which raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand, will be displayed in behalf of the redeemed (Eph. i:19-23) Surely this is divine revelation. No human mind could have ever invented such a scheme. How absolutely impossible for any man to have conceived that the Lord's own should be caught

up to meet Him in the air! It carries with it in its boldness and uniqueness, the assurance that it is the truth, and only to the natural mind, to the modernist with his darkening inventions, it appears foolishness.

And the blessedness, "to meet the Lord in the air"! Then we shall see Him as He is and look into His face of beauty and glory. And then we shall be transformed into His likeness, for it is written "we shall be like Him." How long will the meeting in the air last? Some teach that it will be only momentary, and that the Lord will at once descend to the earth. We know from other Scriptures that this cannot be the case. Between the coming of the Lord *for* His Saints, and His coming *with* His Saints, there is an interval of at least seven years. The judgment seat of Christ must also first be set up, as well as the presentation of the Church in glory (Eph. v:27; Jude verse 24). After the judgment seat with the bestowal of rewards, He will take the Saints into the Father's house, to behold His glory. (John xvii:22). But what will it be, "Forever with the Lord"!

Chapter v:1-4 "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief." The Apostle writes now about "the day of the Lord" and no longer speaks of the coming of the Lord for His Saints and the day of Christ. The day of the Lord with its judgments, what precedes that day, and what follows, is often described by the prophets. See Isaiah ii:12-22; Joel ii and iii; Zeph. i:14-18; Zech. xiv:1-9, etc. Whenever our Lord spoke of that day, He said "when the Son of Man cometh," that is,

His own visible and glorious manifestation. That day will bring judgment for the world. (2 Thess. 1.) The world, and the world-church do not believe in such a day; they dream of peace and safety, of increasing prosperity and expansion, of universal peace and a continued improvement of earthly conditions. Some day the Lord will come suddenly for His Church, and then the world with all its false optimism, false hope, false peace and safety, will suddenly have to face the judgment-tribulations which precede the day of the Lord. Because these judgments, and the times and seasons connected with that day, do not concern those who are the Lord's, the Apostle states that there is no need to write to them about it.

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

The opening verses of the second chapter of this Epistle show that some one had troubled the Thessalonians, and tried to convince them, that the day of the Lord, with its threatened judgments, was actually present. They had received the first Epistle, which must have brought great joy to their hearts. There was on their part renewed waiting for His Son from heaven. A short time after false teachers came, telling them their hope was vain, inasmuch as the predicted tribulation had begun and that they would have to pass through all the horrors of the events, preceding His visible return. As they were then passing through persecutions and tribulations, these false teachers probably told them that their sufferings were the indications that the day of the Lord was upon them. It seems these false teachers had gone so far as to produce a document, which they pretended was a letter from the Apostle (ii:2), in which he seemingly confirmed their views. For this reason Paul attached his own signature to this second Epistle (iii:17).

These teachers belonged undoubtedly to the same class of Judaizers who had sneaked in among the Galatian churches. They attacked the blessed hope given to the Church, and put in its place the judgment and tribulation of the day of the Lord.

They put the Church back under the Law and taught that all which is in store for the ungodly, before His return, would be shared by Christians. To answer this invention, which is still being taught, that the true Church must pass through the great tribulation, the Spirit of God inspired this second Epistle. It contains additional and important truths on the Lord's return.

Chapter i:4-10 "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure, which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer; seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His Saints, and to be admired in all them that believed, in that day (because our testimony among you was believed)." He quiets first of all their fears. The Apostle assures them, that all their persecutions and tribulations, far from having a punitive character, were "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God," with this purpose in view, that they might be "counted worthy of the Kingdom of God" for the sake of which they suffered. They suffered with Him, so that they might also

be glorified together. (Rom. viii:17). And then the contrast. When the day of the Lord comes it will bring the punishment of the ungodly. The ungodly were now troubling them, but when that day comes the ungodly would be troubled, while the troubles of the Saints of God cease forever, and rest and glory will be their lot. The day of the Lord therefore had not yet come. That day will bring the visible manifestation of the Lord, in flaming fire with His mighty angels, and judgment will fall upon the ungodly.

Two classes are especially mentioned. Those that know not God, which means the Gentiles, as well as sinners in general, and "those that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." These are the Jews and nominal, apostate Christians. The latter class will suffer the greater punishment. But when He comes in judgment upon the ungodly, in that day, He will also be glorified and admired in all them that believed. When He comes in power and glory back to earth again, His Saints, the true Church, will no longer be on the earth. The Church, previously caught up in clouds, will come with Him in glory. The time of the manifestation of the sons of God has come (Rom. viii:19). All are transformed into His image, each member of His body reflects His glory. And so the afflicted and despised Thesalonians will then be glorified when He appears. And this is the glorious future of all the redeemed.

Chapter ii:1-12. (Corrected translation) "*Now we beg you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, nor troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as if it were by us, as that the day of the Lord is present.*

"*Let not any one deceive you in any manner, because it will not be unless the apostasy has come first, and the man of sin has been revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts*

himself on high, against all called God, or object of worship; so that he himself sits down in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. Do ye not remember that, being yet with you, I said these things to you. And now ye know that which restrains, that he should be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of Lawlessness already works; only there is He who restrains until He be gone, and then the lawless one shall be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall annul by the brightness of His coming; whose coming is according to the working of Satan in all power, and signs, and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they have not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this reason God sendeth them an energy of error, that they may believe the lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

We find here an additional information as to the coming day of the Lord (not the day of Christ as stated by the authorized version). That day cannot come unless two conditions are fulfilled. There must be first the apostasy, the falling away from the truth, and the man of sin, the son perdition must also be revealed. Both these conditions were mentioned before in the Word of God. The Lord spoke of the moral conditions during the end of the age, and predicted the false Christs, which should come. The Old Testament prophetic Word also speaks of these things. When Paul was with them he had taught these things; he reminds them of his oral ministry.

In view of these conditions it has been said by some, how could the early Christians believe in and wait for the imminent coming of the Lord? There was then no sign of apostasy nor the revelation of the man of sin. But the Apostle wrote also "the mystery of lawlessness already

works." Even in Apostolic times, a falling away began. Such a falling away has gone on throughout this age, but when it closes, the age culminates in *the* apostasy, heading up in the final, personal Anti-christ, the man of sin and the son of perdition. Throughout this age believers could see the mystery of lawlessness at work in every generation and thus could wait for the coming of the Lord as an event near, and not in the distant future.

Who is the man of sin? The Roman Emperor, Nero and other emperors, Mohammed, the Pope and the Papacy, the French Revolution, Napoleon I and others have been mentioned as the predicted man of sin. The most common interpretation and most widely accepted view makes the Papacy the Anti-christ. But this is incorrect, for the Papacy does not deny that Jesus is the Christ, nor does the Pope claim to be Christ. That the Papacy has certain marks of Anti-christianity cannot be denied. Recently certain Catholic writers have charged Modernism, which denies the Virgin-birth and the Deity of Christ, with being Babylon and an Anti-christ. With this we are in fullest agreement.

As John tells us there have been and are many Anti-christs; and never so many as today. Christian Science, Theosophy, Mormonism, Russellism, Modernism, Destructive Criticism, New Thoughtism, the Unity Movement of Kansas City and similar cults are Anti-christian. But Paul speaks here of the final Anti-christ, the heading up of the apostasy, which in its completeness is still unreached.

When he appears he will be the leader of God opposition and Christ defiance. He poseth and exalteth himself against all that is called God. He takes the place of God on earth and demands worship. He will be Satan's man and Satan's masterpiece. We find his picture in Daniel xi:36-39 and in Rev. xiii:11-18. In Revelation he is called

“the false prophet.” He is the one of whom our Lord speaks in John v:43.

“He sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth that he is God.” The temple of God does not mean the Church. It is a Jewish temple. When the true Church is gone from the earth, the Jewish people, partially restored to their own land in unbelief, will erect another temple and institute once more the ancient temple worship. (Isaiah lxvi:1-4). God will despise their worship. Then, during the great tribulation the man of sin will appear, claiming to be the true Messiah, doing lying signs and wonders, by which he will deceive the Jews and also the Gentiles. He takes his place in that temple. He will undoubtedly be a Jew, for the Jews would not receive a Gentile as their Messiah. The present day rehabilitation of the Jews in Palestine, their eagerness to have a temple, a universal house of worship, all without faith in God and with their hatred against the Christ of God, shows how very near all these predicted events are. The ever increasing apostasy of Modernism in the professing church is the shadow of the soon coming great apostasy.

But who keeps back the full revelation of the mystery of lawlessness? Who is He that restrains? (Verses 5-8). Many answers have been given to this question. It is evident that that which restraineth must be a power superior to man and Satan, and of a nature totally different to the man of sin and his work. The restraining power is a person. It is the Holy Spirit of God. When the Church is taken up to meet the Lord in the air, this restraining person, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the body of Christ, the Church, will be taken out of the way. His restraining influences will cease.

God will then permit everything to rush into the apostasy and, in due time, the lawless one will be revealed, accepted by all who did not receive the love of the truth.

The First Epistle to Timothy

The two Epistles to Timothy and the one to Titus are generally called the pastoral Epistles, because they are addressed to these two servants of Christ, who had been put in charge of important churches. Timothy ministered in Ephesus and Titus in Crete. The purpose of the first Epistle to Timothy is stated in Chapter iii:14,15. In the first Epistle the Church is seen as the House of God; in the second Epistle the House of God is anticipated in its failure and disorder. Both Epistles, especially the second Epistle, give solemn prophetic warnings as to the closing of the age and the inrushing apostasy. These warnings must be connected with the warnings our Lord gave and with what we have learned from the second chapter in the preceding Epistle, to the Thessalonians.

Chapter iv:1 "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons." It is a prophetic warning. Inasmuch as the true faith revealed in the infallible, inerrant Word of God, is the foundation upon which everything rests, Satan aims at that first of all. He does so today in Modernism and the New Theology. Then when the true faith is given up, the master-mind of the enemy brings in the false doctrines, the fables of seducing spirits and demons.

Only one direct mention is made in this Epistle of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He exhorted Timothy

to "keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vi:14).

The Second Epistle to Timothy

In this Epistle Timothy is repeatedly exhorted to hold fast the form of sound doctrine. It was probably the last Epistle the prisoner of the Lord wrote and in its prophetic testimony we find the most solemn warnings as to our own times. Here the moral and religious conditions of professing Christendom are faithfully and minutely pictured. In the first chapter, the Apostle gives his own testimony. "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him *against that day.*" This is followed by the first exhortation. (Verses 13,14).

Chapter iii:1-5 "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." Such are the predicted religious conditions which will hold sway during the last days, not in the ungodly world, but among the ungodly masses of professing Christians, who have an outward profession, the form of godliness, but deny the power. Here we see the fruits of the present day modernism, which denies the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These conditions the returning Lord will find on earth.

Chapter iv:1-4 "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His

appearing and His kingdom; Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." This is the last, and the most solemn exhortation, Paul wrote to his son Timothy. With the coming of the Lord before his heart, he charges him to preach the Word at all times. The blessed hope gives energy to continue in the faithful ministry of the Truth of God. What the Apostle beheld here and penned by the Holy Spirit nineteen hundred years ago has come to pass. Sound doctrine is no longer endured. The outcry is against the dogma, the form of sound words.

Away with the faith of our fathers! Away with the belief in the Bible as the infallible Word of God! Away with the belief that Christ is the Virgin-born Son of God! This is followed by belief in fables, such as the evolution fable. These conditions which are now with us will lead on towards that complete apostasy of which Paul speaks in 2 Thess. ii and in the manifestation of the man of sin.

Chapter iv:6-9 "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing." The martyr's death loomed up before the prisoner of the Lord when he wrote these most blessed words.

The correct translation of the first sentence is "For I am already being offered," that is, his heart contemplated in joyful anticipation, the hour when he would depart and be

with Christ. He knows there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness. He does not say that he will receive this crown immediately upon his departure, but that He will receive it from the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, the righteous Judge, in that day, when he and all the Saints will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. What a crown he will receive in the day of Christ! And the crown of righteousness is here also promised to all who love His appearing. This means more than loving the truth of the coming of the Lord. If we love His appearing, we shall also walk in separation from the world, and, like the Apostle, fight the good fight and keep the faith. Again we say, how meaningless all this would be if Christ did not come back.

The Epistle to Titus

In this Epistle, addressed to Titus, a Greek convert of the Apostle Paul (Tit. i:4:Gal.iii:3), we find but one reference to our Lord's return.

Chapter ii:11-13 "For the grace of God, bringing salvation for all men, hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

This is a comprehensive statement of the Gospel and true Christianity. The grace of God appeared in the Son of God, our Lord. This grace comes to man bringing salvation, offering salvation to all men, because Christ died for our sins. The same grace teaches how to live and walk in the present age, and supplies the power for a sober, righteous

and godly life. Then we read of the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is coming again for His Saints; this is the blessed hope; He will appear in glory; this is His visible manifestation, when we shall be manifested with Him in glory. This hope is seen once more as an incentive for a holy life. These things Titus was to speak with all authority.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

In the first chapter of this Epistle the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in His exaltation at the right hand of God. After He made purification of sins, He was constituted heir of all things, being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. This fact is attested by the Old Testament prophetic Word. The Spirit of God uses the Book of Psalms and quotes from seven Psalms. These Psalms reveal His matchless person, and in several of them His glory, dependent on a future manifestation, is predicted. The second Psalm, which is quoted, reveals the fact that some day He will be enthroned as King upon the holy hill of Zion and receive the nations for His inheritance, over whom He will rule. The next Psalm quoted is the eighty ninth, here we find the promise "I will make Him my Firstborn (as risen from the dead), higher than the kings of the earth." The forty fifth Psalm, mentioned in verses 8 and 9, speaks prophetically of His future throne, and the one hundred and tenth Psalm tells us that His place at the right hand of God is occupied by Him till God makes His enemies the footstool of His feet. Then He will receive His kingly rights and judge the nations. All these prophetic Psalms can only be fulfilled with His return.

Chapter ii:6-10 "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that He by the grace of God should taste death for everything. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."

The eighth Psalm is quoted and we learn that the second Man, the last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the One under whose feet all things are to be put into subjection. He was made a little lower than the angels; He suffered on the cross and is now exalted at the right hand of God. As we learned from other Scriptures (see 1 Cor. xv:22-27) all things will be put under His feet, not through the work of the Church, but on the day of His return.

Chapter ix:28 "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." The context states three appearances of Christ. He appeared once in the end of the world (that is, age, the Jewish age) to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. This is His first coming to suffer and to die.

He appears now in the presence of God for us, as our high priest. This appearing is unseen by human eyes. Then as surely as He appeared once on earth to die, so He will

appear a second time unto salvation to them that look for Him. There is then a "second coming" or "appearing."

What does it mean "unto them that look for Him"? Some teach that He comes and takes unto Himself only those Christians who actually wait for Him and look for Him. They teach that all others will be left behind to go through the great tribulation. Scripture does not teach any such thing. All true believers believe in a return of our Lord. It is the universal belief of all Christians. If any man denies that He is ever coming again in person, as He promised and as the Holy Spirit so abundantly testifies through His Apostles, that man can hardly be called a true believer. All true believers look for Him at some time. To share in the glory promised with His coming is not the question of belief in the mode and manner of His coming, but it is solely the question of being born again and belonging to Christ. "All who are Christ's at His coming" will share in that future salvation and glory. (1 Cor.xv:23) Countless thousands of Christians died, who knew nothing of His coming, as we know it. Yet they will all be raised when He comes, not because they had a scriptural creed about His coming, but because they belong to Christ and are members of His body. But there is a more positive interpretation which we must not overlook. The Epistle was addressed to believing Hebrews.

When the age ends, as we have seen before in this volume, a Jewish believing remnant will be on the earth, waiting for Him and His visible manifestation. Those who wait for Him during the tribulation will be delivered when He comes. He appears unto them particularly "unto salvation."

Chapter x:25 "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." The day mentioned, is the day of His return.

That day is approaching throughout this age. Each generation can say "the night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. xiii:12).

Verse 37 "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." This is a partial quotation of Hab.ii: 3-4. With God an age of almost two thousand years is but a little while. But the emphasis is upon the fact that He will come and will not tarry.

CHAPTER V

THE RETURN OF THE LORD IN THE GENERAL EPISTLES

The Epistle of James

The Epistle of James, addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, is the earliest Epistle, having been written about the year 45 A. D.

It has partially a prophetic character, inasmuch as we find exhortations as to the last days. The believing Israelites to whom this Epistle was first of all addressed stand prophetically for the believing remnant of the end of the age. The conditions prevailing during this coming period of time are once more described.

Chapter v:1-6 "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments motheaten.

Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you." One can easily see how these words are applicable to the very end of the age, when oppression rules, and the just are persecuted and killed. When that day comes the rich may well howl and weep.

Verses 7-8 "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.

Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

While this exhortation has a special meaning for those believing Jews living during the great tribulation, it also has a message for all true believers.

When we remember the coming day of our gathering together unto Him, the day in which all will be manifested in His presence, and the day when we shall appear with Him in glory, we too shall be patient now in our tribulations and trials.

The First Epistle of Peter

This Epistle is addressed "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." They were not Gentiles, but the Jewish believers, who were scattered as strangers in those provinces among the Gentiles. In writing to them Peter carried out the commission given to him by the Lord to strengthen his brethren. They were passing through much suffering. They had fiery trials and many persecutions. He reminds them at once of the better inheritance they had obtained, the inheritance which is to be revealed and possessed in the last time.

Chapter i:3-7 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much

more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." As Jews they had the promise of an earthly inheritance. The godly in Israel looked for the day when the promise made to Abraham should be realized, and they would inherit, under the reign of the Messiah, the land. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, their Messiah and Saviour, they had received an inheritance reserved, not on earth, but in heaven. That inheritance is the Father's house, the glory where He is. It is the future salvation, the complete redemption, the fulness of glory, to be revealed in the last time.

That time is the day of His manifestation. In that day of His appearing all their trials and persecutions would turn out unto praise and honour and glory. What an incentive to suffer in meekness and in patience!

In the next place Peter speaks of the testimony of the Old Testament prophets. The Spirit of Christ testified through them concerning the sufferings that are in Christ, and the glory that should follow. (Verse 11).

The things they announced which angels desired to look into, the Gospel, is now preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. (Verse 12). Then follows in verse 13 another mention of the revelation of Christ.

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The revelation, the *Apokalypsis*, is the full revelation of His glory in the day of His visible manifestation. In that day when He appears we shall appear with Him in glory, and grace will be consummated.

Chapter iv:13 *"But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."* The Holy Spirit

comforts those who suffered, being partakers of Christ's suffering, with the coming glory, when His glory will be revealed. The more suffering now, the greater the joy in the day of His revelation.

Chapter v:4 "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." The Lord Jesus spoke of Himself as the good shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep. Paul in the last chapter of Hebrews calls Him the great shepherd, risen from the dead. Peter speaks of Him as the chief shepherd. He will be manifested in this character at His return. Then the true servant will receive from His hands the crown of glory. Thus Peter witnesses, as Paul did, and as the Lord said, that there will be no rewards for service given, till He comes.

The Second Epistle of Peter

This second Epistle has a decided prophetic character. Peter was now an old man. The Lord had told him at the lake of Tiberias that he would be crucified, when an old man. (John xxi). He knew therefore that he must soon put off his tabernacle. Then he speaks first of all of the transfiguration as revealing the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See comment on Matthew xvi:27-28). That glorious event, foreshadowing His return, makes the Old Testament prophetic Word more sure (i:19). After these statements Peter speaks of the importance of the prophetic Word and how it came into existence, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

In the second chapter he bears a witness as to the conditions of professing Christendom when this present age closes. This chapter reads like the Epistle of Jude, though there are many differences. Peter did not copy from Jude, nor

did Jude copy from Peter, but both bear an independent witness given by the Spirit of God as to the coming apostasy. All harmonizes with what the Lord said as to the close of the age and what the Holy Spirit witnessed through the Apostle Paul.

The third chapter is entirely prophetic and in its revelations leads us forward towards the new heaven and the new earth.

Chapter iii:3-4 "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." According to Peter's prophecy the blessed hope will be ridiculed and scoffed at in the last days. It is so today. The Spirit of God evidently has in mind the evolution theory, which is so very prominent in these days. Things continue as they were and a catastrophic ending of this age is put down as unbelievable, and those who believe that there are such things coming, as predicted in connection with the Lord's return, are branded as fanatics. Then the Spirit of God shows up their willing ignorance. Geology shows to them, who do not believe the Bible, that this globe had a catastrophic period in the past when "the earth that then was, being overflowed with water, perished."

Then he continues:

Chapter iii:7-10 "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to

repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Peter predicts that the day will come when the earth will be burned up, when the heavens will be passing away with a great noise and all will melt with a fervent heat. Leading astronomers tell us that they have discovered that some of the stars in the heaven burn up now and then, and that such a conflagration is in store for our globe, and the surrounding heavens. Peter was not an astronomer; he had not a telescope nor a spectroscope, yet he penned that which painstaking astronomy has but recently discovered. It is one of the evidences of supernatural inspiration and revelation.

But of what day does Peter speak here? The twelfth verse mentions the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. In the seventh verse we read of the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. It is not the day of the Lord, when He comes back to earth again to begin His kingly reign, but it is the end of that day, which lasts for a thousand years and which ushers in the day of God, when God will be all in all. (1 Cor. xv:28). That great coming "Day of the Lord," His reign upon and over the earth, when all things will be put under His feet, has a fiery beginning and a fiery ending. When His thousand year reign ends, the judgment of ungodly men will take place, recorded in Rev. xx:11-15. The great conflagration of which Peter speaks takes place then, when once more that day comes like a thief in the night, after the earth has had her great millennium. After that follows the new heavens and the new earth (verse 13), just as we read in Revelation xxi, fol-

lowing the passing away of the heaven and earth as they are now, and the great white throne judgment; "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth."

The First Epistle of John

The first Epistle of John has been called "a family letter." It concerns only the children of God, those who enter the family of God by the new birth. The blessed hope is mentioned prominently in this Epistle. We quote the two passages.

Chapter ii:28 "And now little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

The beloved disciple addresses the members of the family of God as little children and exhorts them to abide in Christ. The day is coming when He will appear, and John, as a teacher and Apostle, knows that in that day he and other servants of Christ will have confidence, joy and glory, in His presence, if those to whom they ministered abided faithfully; if not, they would be ashamed before Him at His coming. (See 1 Thess. ii:19).

Chapter iii:1-3 "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

These are beautiful words. But those who do not believe in the literal return of the Lord cannot claim them, nor can they tell us how the promise given can ever be realized apart from His coming again.

In Christ, the unspeakable gift of the Father's love, we are called the children of God. As Paul wrote in Romans (Chapter viii) "if children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ." What we shall be has not yet appeared. It is still a blessed secret with the Father. But we know one thing "we shall be like Him." This is the hope of the calling of God.

We shall be transformed into the same image; our bodies of humiliation will be changed and become like unto His own glorious body. But when?

When He shall appear. And if He does not appear we have no hope that such a glorious transformation will ever take place. This hope which we have has in it the power of purification. It is a separating hope. He who believes in it with his heart will not love the world and the things which are in the world, but will love Him and His appearing.

The Epistle of Jude

This Epistle, like the second chapter in Peter's second Epistle, predicts the moral and religious conditions of Christendom at the close of this age. Jude writes of something which we do not find in the Epistle of Peter.

Verses 14 and 15. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His Saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

From Genesis v we learn that Enoch walked with God for three hundred years. Then God took him. In what this consisted we find recorded in Hebrews xi. "By faith was Enoch translated that he should not see death; and was not found

because God had translated him, for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." And here we have additional information.

He was a prophet. He prophesied of the coming of the Lord in judgment.

It was at the close of an age, when darkness and violence began to spread over the human race, before the days of Noah, the end of that age, were reached. He heralded the coming of the Lord and as a result the ungodly spoke against him. Can we expect anything better from the ungodly world and the ungodly professing church, at the close of the present age?

Enoch is abruptly introduced in this little Epistle for a purpose. He is in his experience a prophecy. The true Church at the close of this age, is, like Enoch, surrounded by scoffers, while the world itself rapidly nears the days of Noah, for violence is in the earth. But before the days of Noah return, as our Lord predicted in His prophecy, the true Church will be removed in a supernatural way, as Enoch was taken. May all those who believe in the Lord's return walk with God and bear witness to His coming to bring judgment upon the ungodly, as Enoch walked with God and witnessed for Him.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETURN OF THE LORD IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The final book of the New Testament is the only prophetic book in the New Testament Scriptures. Its prophetic character is indicated in the very beginning (Chapter i:3). We have learned that there is a prophetic element in every portion of the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ exercised His office as the Prophet, when on earth, and predicted things to come concerning Jerusalem, His own nation, the Gentiles, the present age, and above all did He predict His return in power and glory to receive His own throne. The message of apostolic preaching included prophecy. Every one of the great doctrinal Epistles reveals prophetically the consummation and fullness of redemption, when Christ comes again. In this last Bible book given through the Apostle John, when a prisoner on the island of Patmos, we find the greatest New Testament unfolding of the visible return of the Lord and the events connected with it. Not only what is revealed in the New Testament, but also Old Testament prophecies are restated once more in this majestic book which leads us from time into eternity. One of the reasons why the prophetic message of the Revelation has been so much misunderstood and misinterpreted is the ignorance of expositors as to the contents of the prophetic Word in the Old Testament and God's revealed purposes. This great capstone of the entire revelation of God must forever remain a sealed book if the personal, visible and glorious return of Christ is not owned. It has been so much criticized and even ridiculed because that coming great event which will enthrone the Lord Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords is not believed.

The correct title is "the Revelation"; the name of the Apostle John should be omitted, though it was communicated through John, the book is not the revelation of St. John. As the opening verse tells us, it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The word revelation in the Greek "*Apocalypsis*" means "Unveiling." We find in this book the unveiling of the Person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. While on earth our Lord said "Search the Scriptures . . . they are they that testify of Me." The final testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ is given in this book. Here we read of His Deity, His life and witness on earth, His sacrificial death, His resurrection and exaltation; but above all His glorious return is prominently made known. He is seen in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; He sends messages from His throne to the churches. We behold Him as the Lamb in the midst of the throne; He is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who receives from God's hands the seven sealed book. He breaks the seals, sends forth the trumpeting angels and the seven angels which pour out the vials of divine wrath. Again we see Him as the Angel of the covenant presenting before God the prayers of the Saints, and entitled to the possession of the land and the sea. John beheld Him sitting upon a white cloud crowned with a golden crown, and a sickle in His hand, and finally He appears riding upon the white horse followed by the armies of heaven to conquer the hostile forces and begin His glorious reign over the earth.

The charge brought against this majestic book that it is disjointed and lacks an orderly construction is wholly unfounded. It is the opposite; all is arranged in perfect order. The first great prophetic message of this book concerns the Church on earth. The seven church messages give a startling prophetic forecast of the history of the Church on earth from Apostolic days till the true Church is taken to glory

and the apostate Church is disowned. This is found in the second and third chapters. Then follows the vision of the glorified church in the presence of the throne, after which we find the things which are coming upon the earth during the last seven years of tribulation with which the present age closes. When the end of those years comes He is revealed from heaven and His kingdom reign begins. Finally we behold in this book the issues of eternity.

After these introductory remarks we turn to a closer examination of the different passages in which His return is mentioned.

Chapter i.4-8 "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be to you, and peace, from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him who loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen. Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

These are the words of sublime greeting with which the Book begins. The Son of God is revealed here in His essential Deity and in His Incarnation. In His essential Deity He is the "I Am," Jehovah, the self-existing One, who was, who is and who is to come. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, the Almighty. In incarnation we know Him as Jesus Christ. Of Him this text speaks in a threefold way. He is the faithful witness.

Such He was on earth as He made God known to man and witnessed to the Truth. Then He is the first begotten from the dead, which indicates His death, the death of the cross. In the third place He is called "the prince of the kings of the earth"; this is a title which He will receive in the future when He returns to earth and claims His crown rights over all the earth, purchased by His blood.

Then follows an outburst of praise. It is not the worshipful praise of John, but the praise of the Holy Spirit through the true Church. The Saints, those who know Christ, praise Him for His mighty love, because they know He died for their sins, has cleansed them by His blood and given them a place with Himself. The possession of this place awaits His return. He does not yet have the kingdom, nor does He reign as King; only when He reigns can His own reign with Him over the earth. The announcement of His coming with clouds is His appearing to the world. It is the same of which He spoke in Matthew xxiv:30, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth (land) mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The tribes are the tribes of Israel. Two other passages of Scripture throw light on this verse. In John xix:34-36 is the record of the pierced side; His legs were not broken. John informs us that these things, the piercing of His side and the unbroken legs, were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled. But while we read of the Scripture fulfilled that a bone of Him shall not be broken, John writes that another Scripture *says* "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." It is still unfulfilled. That is why the word fulfilled is not used. This Scripture is found in Zech. xii:10. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications, and they

shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Those who pierced Him are His own people Israel, who rejected Him. The context shows that this takes place "in that day," that is the day of the Lord, when He appears visibly. Jerusalem will be in great trouble and distress (Zech. xiv), but He will appear for their salvation and for the judgment of their enemies. The glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ retains the nail prints and the mark of the pierced side (John xx:27; Luke xxiv:40). "Behold, He cometh with clouds," is therefore His visible, second Coming, when all the remnant of Israel, will turn to Him and be saved by Him (Rom. xi:26).

The seven messages, which the glorified Christ sent from the throne to seven churches in existence in Asia Minor at the close of the first century, contain the history of the entire Church on earth in a nutshell. The omniscient Lord knew from the beginning what the course of the professing church would be, beginning with the first declension in apostolic days down to the end of the age when apostasy would demand judgment. In the seven local assemblies He selected and addressed, He beheld certain characteristics, which later would become the prominent features of the entire professing church. To give a complete outline of the prophetic significance of these messages is not the purpose of this work. We have done so elsewhere.* We briefly state that the message to Ephesus gives the picture of the Church at the time the Apostles had ended their testimony (with the exception of John). Smyrna shows the Church during the dreadful persecutions under the different Roman emperors. Pergamos presents the Church being corrupted by identi-

*Exposition of Revelation by A. C. G. 230 pp. 85 cents postpaid.

fication with the world and by priestly assumption. Thyatira gives a prophetic picture of the Roman Catholic apostasy. Sardis is the Reformation period. Philadelphia and Laodicea describe the conditions of the professing Church apart from Rome, at the close of the age. Philadelphia is the faithful, loyal remnant, who keep His Word and deny not His Name. Laodicea is Modernism, the Protestant church in apostasy.

In the first three messages the Lord does not mention His coming at all. But He speaks of His return in the four other messages. The first three periods are gone and will never appear again; the last four periods and phases remain till the Lord comes back. For this reason He does not speak of His return in the messages to Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos, for He knew these periods would pass before His return. Not so with the last four; Roman Catholicism with all its evil doctrines, its superstitions and evil practises remains, till He comes. Sardis, the Reformation Churches, remain and when He comes He will find on earth an apostate church, which He disowns.

To those faithful even in the Roman corruption He says: "*But that which ye have hold fast till I come.*" (Chapter ii:25.) Then He gives those overcomers a promise. "*And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star.*" The noble men and women, thousands of them, who during Romish night held fast the truth of God and sealed their noble confession with their blood, after cruel tortures, have not yet received the promised power over the nations, nor do they, as disembodied spirits, rule with a rod of iron. The promise, yea all the promises, in the book of Revelation, will be made good when the Lord

Jesus Christ returns. If He does not come again to receive from the Father's hands the nations for His inheritance all His promises made to the overcomers are failures, and those whose trusted in them trusted in vain.

Chapter iii:3-5. "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come unto thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He that overcometh the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess His name before My Father, and before His angels." Sardis represents the Reformation period and the Churches of the Reformation. They will exist, like Roman Catholicism, till He comes. The Lord calls on Protestantism to hold fast and to repent, exactly that which Protestantism is not doing today. What the glorified Christ says as to His coming as a thief will some day take place. It is not a coming in some other way, but His personal coming. The faithful ones who confess Him in the midst of Protestant failure and denial of the faith will He own before His Father and the angels. When will that be? Mark viii:38 tells us it will be at His coming. The message to Philadelphia which follows brings into view the true Church, the faithful remnant, those who walk in separation and who own Christ alone. They are a feeble folk for He says, "Thou hast a little strength." They keep His Word and do not deny His Name. The Lord of glory has given to them an open door, which no man can shut. We hear what He has to say to this faithful, loyal remnant of His people, who represent the assembly, His body in these days of the end of the age.

Chapter iii 10-12. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation (trial), which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out, and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and I will write upon him My new name."

Here is a gracious promise of exemption, which every true believer can claim. There is coming an hour of trial for all the world. What else can this mean but that coming time of tribulation with which the ages closes, and of which the Lord spoke while on earth (Matthew xxiv:21) and also His Apostles (2 Thess. ii)? Before that hour of trial arrives, not while it is in process, He will take His true Church to glory and 1 Thess. iv. 16-18 will be fulfilled. The believer who belongs to this remnant remembers daily His promise "I come quickly" and waits for Him.

Laodicea runs parallel with Philadelphia. Laodicea is the professing church in apostasy; it is the Modernism of today. In this message He speaks as the coming judge. He threatens to spue the nauseating thing out of His mouth. He calls to repentance and speaks of Himself as standing at the door. From Laodicea there is no recovery. No new reformation takes place. No great revival restores things as they were in the beginning. Here we have a divine forecast of the end-history of the professing church on earth. While there is His true Church waiting for His coming, true to Him, holding fast the form of sound words, the great mass of professing Christians will depart from the faith once and for all delivered

unto the Saints, so that when He comes He will not find the faith upon the earth, as He announced (Luke xviii:8).

Chapter iv:1-2. "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be afterwards. And immediately I was in the spirit, and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne."

A great change suddenly takes place. John is transported in the spirit from earth to heaven. Earthly things are left behind and the unseen, heavenly things appear. Such a sudden change is in store for the true Church. It will take place when His gracious promise in John xiv:1-3 is fulfilled. In the preceding chapter we read of His promise "I will keep thee from the hour of trial," and His threat "I will spue thee out of My mouth." The opening words of the fourth chapter show the fulfillment of the promise and the threat as well. The true Church will be taken up to glory; the apostate church is seen completely rejected.

Symbolically the words in the beginning of this chapter stand for that great revelation penned by the Apostle Paul in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians (iv:16-18). The open door is the symbol of the entrance of the Saints into His presence. As it is written in Paul's revelation, so here we read of a voice speaking and also the trumpet. The shout which will gather His Saints together to meet Him in the air will probably consist in the words which John heard, "Come up hither." As John was immediately in the spirit in the presence of the Lord, so we, when the Lord comes for His Saints, will be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. xv:52).

We find then here in the Revelation the definite information that before the tribulation with which this age

closes, revealed in detail in Chapters vi-xix, can pass into history, the Lord will take His people to be with Himself. This is also indicated by the word "afterward" . . . the things which must be afterward. We are still living in the things "which are," that is in the period of the Church on earth. The things afterward appear after the rapture of the Saints of God. All events in the book of Revelation after the third chapter are future.

In the fourth and fifth chapters the redeemed are seen in glory as a glorified and worshipping company. An impressive scene takes place which is related to His return. In the beginning of the fifth chapter we read that God holds in His right hand a seven sealed book. It is found that the One who alone is worthy to receive the book, to break its seals, to make known its contents is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David." The Lion appears at once in the midst of the redeemed as "a Lamb as it had been slain." For the redeemed He is the Lamb of God. They heard on earth the message "Behold the Lamb of God!" They looked and lived. But He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah as well. He will manifest His Lion-character in royal judgments when He is about to return and in the day of His visible manifestation. The book He receives contains the judgment actions of Almighty God, of which He is the executor, as well as the title deeds to the earth. "The Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son" (John v:22). When He came the first time He came for salvation. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn (judge) the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii:17). When He comes the second time He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts xvii:31).

He receives the book and breaks the seals. When the sixth seal is broken the end of the age with His visible manifestation appears.

Chapter vi:12 "And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" (See Isaiah ii:10-22; xiii:9-11; Matthew xxiv:30-31.)

The seal judgments are followed by the trumpet judgments and the vial judgments. In connection with the sounding of the seventh trumpet His glorious manifestation and victory is again mentioned.

Chapter xi:15-17 "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, which wast, and art to come, because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned." Not till these judgments are accomplished during the end of this age will the world be converted and the nations learn righteousness. The kingdoms of this world can only become

the kingdom of Christ at the time of His return. World conversion before the second coming of Christ is an unscriptural delusion.

Chapter xiv: 14-16 "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud sat one like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap, for the time is come for Thee to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." It is the time of the harvest, the end of the age, of which our Lord spoke in two of His parables (Matthew xiii). He is the great reaper, and He also uses the angels as we read in the verses which follow.

Chapter xv: 3-4 "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before Thee, for Thy judgments are manifest." This is the song of the victors over the beast, the overcomers during the reign of Antichrist (Chapter xiii), His victory, when all nations worship Him and all evil is dethroned. But that will not take place till His judgments are manifest in the earth (Isaiah xxvi:9) and His judgments are always linked with His return.

Chapter xvi: 15 "Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

These are His own words. Chronologically in this book they were spoken when the tribulation is nearing its end and all is preparing for the battle of that great day of God

Almighty, the battle of Armageddon. The exhortation is addressed to the Jewish remnant, suffering during the tribulation, and waiting for His coming, when deliverance is in store for them. When the seventh angel pours out his vial into the air, the consummation is at hand, and the day of His visible manifestation . . . (verses 17-21).

After a description of the mystical Babylon (Chapters xvii-xviii) and the judgment of it, the book introduces us once more to a heavenly scene. The voice of much people is heard, saying, Hallelujah! Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. All heaven is celebrating the overthrow of Babylon and the victory which is now at hand for the Son of Man. His reign is about to begin. "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord God reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready" (xix:1-7). The Bride of the Lamb, the Church, is now come to her glorious rights bestowed upon her by Him who loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Then all is ready for, not an opened door in the heavens, but for the opened heavens, and for the age-long expected manifestation of the returning Christ in great power and glory, to conquer with one mighty blow the opposing forces of evil, to dethrone Satan and to take His own throne to exercise the rule of righteousness and peace.

Chapter xix:11-16 "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many diadems, and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed in a vesture dipped in

blood, and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations, and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and He treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

The language is symbolical. The white horse typifies the victory of Him who sits upon the horse. He comes wearing many diadems. The brow which was once crowned in mockery with the cruel crown of thorns, wears now the diadems of kingly glories, such as were never seen upon earthly kings. His glory is told out in the names He bears. He has a name which is unknown, known only to Himself. It is the name of His essential Deity. His next name is "the Word of God." It is the name which speaks of His incarnation, when He walked upon the earth among men. The third name is His name of the future. While He is constituted "King of kings and Lord of lords" in the eternal purposes, and this title belongs to Him, He is not yet enthroned as King and Lord over all. Not in this dispensation but in the next, the dispensation of the fulness of times (Eph. i:10) will all things be put under His feet. That dispensation will be ushered in when heaven opens and He comes forth, as seen in this Patmos vision, as the mighty conqueror. He comes to overthrow the gathered nations under the leadership of the beast" (Chapter xiii:1-10). "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His armies" (Verse 19). The day of Armageddon has come. The stone, which Nebuchadnezzar saw falling out of heaven, strikes, and the end of the times

of the Gentiles has come (Daniel ii). He smites the nations in judgment. He gathers them as the kingly Judge, and as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats so He will separate them (Matthew xxv:31-32). He is enthroned upon Zion's hill and as long ago predicted in the second Psalm, He begins His rule with a rod of iron, the rule of righteousness, followed by the rod of peace, when all enemies have been subdued (Psalm cx:2). The armies of heaven which He brings with Himself are the redeemed hosts, as well as the holy angels. All He predicted while on earth as to His return will then literally be fulfilled.

In the twentieth chapter we have His thousand-year reign revealed. It is the kingdom reign, when all things are put in subjection under His feet, when nations turn swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. Satan will be bound by Him (Genesis iii:15), the first great promise of the Bible, will then be fulfilled. The head of the serpent is crushed. He can no longer deceive the nations. Christ reigns and the redeemed reign with Him over the earth. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." During these thousand years every prophecy of blessing and glory in both Testaments will be literally fulfilled. Peace on earth and "glory to God in the highest" has now come. His own people have their rewards and what He promised for the time of regeneration has been realized (Matthew xix:28).

We do not follow here the ending of the Kingdom reign of Christ. The reader will find this explained in our complete exposition of Revelation, nor do we enlarge on the eternal issues as revealed in this book. We quote the remaining references to His return.

Four times in the last chapter of Revelation, and therefore the last chapter of the whole Bible, His Return is mentioned. In doing so the Holy Spirit shows that with Him it is not the unessential doctrine, of no account and little consequence, as stated by so many theologians.

Chapter xxii:7 “Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” It is one of the last beatitudes of the Bible. Those who sneer at this book, and the thousands of indifferent Christians who never read this book or ponder over its wonderful revelations, have no share whatever in this blessing. But if a Christian believes in the personal and glorious return of the Lord, that Christian will read and study this greatest of all prophetic books, and keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Chapter xxii:12 “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me to give every man according as his work shall be.” The previous passage in which the Lord announced His return and a promised blessing speaks of obedience; the second announcement of His coming is linked with the promised reward. What He had spoken on earth (Matthew xxv: 8-27) He repeats from glory. His coming brings the rewards for His servants (2 Tim. iv:8).

Chapter xxii:17 “And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

The preceding verse contains His own words. “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and Morning Star.” This self-witness brings at once a response from the Holy Spirit. The Morning Star is the harbinger of the nearing dawn, with the rising Sun in all His glory. His visible return in great power and glory is spoken of in the last chapter of the last book of the Old Testament

as "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings" (Mal. iv:2). The Morning Star denotes His coming for His Saints. For this the Holy Spirit longs, when He can present the complete body of Christ, the assembly in His presence. Therefore He utters His "Come," not here the invitation to the sinner, which follows directly, but the "Come" is addressed to Him who is the root and offspring of David, the bright and Morning Star. The Bride is the assembly, the true Church. The Spirit dwells in her and she joins in and says "Come." The Spirit and the Bride desire longingly His coming. But there is another "Come." It is addressed to those who know Him not, who have no share and part in the coming glory, when His own are gathered home into the Father's house. The last Gospel invitation, the last "whosoever" is given in this verse.

Chapter xxii:20 "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus." This is His last word. Once more He announces His coming. It will be suddenly. The next word which His own will hear from His lips is the shout (1 Thess. iv:16), the "Come up hither." The prayer "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus" is the answer of His waiting bride, the Church. For centuries it has been the forgotten prayer. But now it is prayed as never before. The prayer will be answered when He comes suddenly, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. May we never forget to pray this last prayer in the Bible.

CHAPTER VII

TWENTY PROMINENT FACTS TAUGHT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ON THE RETURN OF THE LORD

In our examination of the teaching in the New Testament on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ we have discovered the great prominence of this doctrine. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke frequently of His second coming. He announced it to His disciples. He gave them prophetically the program of the end of the age. He spoke of His return in different parables. He gave in His farewell discourse the promise of the blessed hope to His eleven followers, the Apostles. Even in the presence of His accusers He mentioned His return in the clouds of heaven. At His ascension the two heavenly visitors re-stated His return in like manner as He went up to heaven. We have learned that Peter preached it in his second address in the book of Acts, and that apostolic preaching and teaching did not neglect this great theme, it held an important place in their ministry and was the hope and comfort of the early Church.

Furthermore the testimony of the great documents of Christianity, the Epistles, teach that His return is the goal of redemption. Some of the most vital doctrines of the faith are linked to this truth, that Christ will come back. We have seen that the resurrection of those who died in Christ, our re-union with them, the rewards for faithful service, the promised crowns and also the promised blessings for the earth are, besides much else, entirely dependent on His return. If there is no second coming of Christ the whole truth of Christianity breaks down. Then we learned from the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse, the fitting capstone of the whole Word of God, the last word on His return.

Here the Old and New Testament revelations as to this event, what precedes and what follows His return, are all restated.

And now we give facts taught in the New Testament about the Lord's coming.

1. *The New Testament does not teach that the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost is the second coming of Christ.* This is one of the erroneous theories taught by commentators. They claim that when our Lord spoke of His return, that He meant the coming of the Holy Spirit. But such a teaching is unknown in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. How then can the third person of the Godhead be the promised return of God the Son, the second person?

2. *Nor does the New Testament teach that the Destruction of Jerusalem is the promised return of Christ.* This view is also found in many commentaries. It is repeated by others, who, instead of searching the Scriptures search the comments of expositors of past generations. The destruction of Jerusalem was predicted by the Lord Jesus Christ. But nowhere does He say that He would come again at that time. As pointed out before Matthew xxiv:31 is the fatal blow to this view. Many commentators teach that verses 29 and 30 mean His coming in the destruction of Jerusalem. But when Jerusalem was destroyed He did not send His angels to gather His elect, the people Israel, from the four winds. They were scattered into the four corners of the earth instead.

3. *Christ does not come again when the believer dies.* This also is taught by many. When the Lord Jesus said to His disciples "I will come again and receive you unto myself," they say, He meant the death of the disciples, when He would come to take them to Himself. But the death of the believer is never spoken of as the second coming of Christ.

When the believer dies the Lord does not come for him, but the believer goes to be with the Lord. For this view there is not a line of Scripture in the entire New Testament.

4. *His return is a personal return.* He said that He would go away. It was not a phantom departure, but He went in person. And he said "I will come again." He did not mean a spiritual return, but a personal coming again. His words cannot be interpreted in any other way. Furthermore the two men in white apparel said to the disciples "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i:11). Wherever His return is mentioned in the New Testament it means the return of the same One who lived on earth, who died on the cross, was buried, rose again and ascended up on high.

5. *It will be a visible return.* His words "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew xxiv:30) teach His visible coming again beyond the shadow of a doubt. So does Rev. i:7, "Every eye shall see Him." Scoffers sometimes say, How is this possible? But every eye on earth every twenty-four hours sees the sun in the heavens. Thus in that day when He descends in the cloud every eye will behold Him.

6. *His return will be in great power and glory.* "And they shall see the Son of Man coming in great power and glory" (Mark xiii:26). The Epistles speak of His glorious appearing (Tit. ii:13; 2 Thess. i:9). This power and glory is prominently revealed in the Apocalypse.

7. *The Angels of God will accompany Him in His return.* "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels" (Matthew xvi:27). "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Thess. i:8). He will send forth the angels and use them as

His messengers. These unseen tenants of the heavens will become visible in His return.

8. *He will bring all His Saints, the redeemed of both Testaments, with Him.* (See 1 Thess. iv:14; Rev. xix:14.) It will be His glorification as well as the glorification of the Saints. "When He shall come to be glorified in His Saints, and to be admired in all them that believed, in that day (because our testimony among you was believed)" (2 Thess. i:10).

9. *His return will be suddenly, like the lightning and like a thief.* The following passages teach this: Matthew xxiv:27; 42-51; Mark xiii:35, 36; Rev. xvi:15; xxii:7; 12; 20.

10. *The present age remains unchanged till He returns.* The New Testament teaches that not Christ, but Satan, is the god of this age and the prince of it. (2 Cor. iv:4; Eph. ii:2.) Satan is not dethroned till Christ comes again. (See Rev. xx:1-2.) Therefore this age remains an evil age down to its end.

11. *His return is preceded by the falling away.* Throughout this age there has been going on a falling away from the truth. John wrote of the many antichrists in his day. (1 John ii.) The mystery of iniquity was then already at work (2 Thess. ii). When the end of the age comes (Matthew xiii) the harvest, the tares which began in the beginning of the age will be full grown. When He comes again He will not find "the faith on the earth" (Luke xviii:8); the days of Noah and Lot have returned, days of violence and lust (Luke xvii:26-37). The Epistles bear a startling testimony as to the final great apostasy, an apostasy which is apparent today, for the modernistic rationalism in the different evangelical denominations is the beginning of this falling away (See 2 Thess. ii; 1 Tim. iv:1, 2; 2 Tim. iii:1-5; iv:1-4; Epistle of Jude; 2 Peter ii and iii).

12. *His return is preceded by the manifestation of the final, personal Antichrist, the man of sin and the son of perdition.* The Lord announced the coming of such a one. He predicted false Christs, with lying signs and wonders (Matthew xxiv:24, 25; John v:43; 2 Thess. ii; Revelation xiii).

13. *His return is preceded by the budding of the fig-tree and a final witness to the nations of the world* (Matthew xxiv:14 and 32, 33). There will be national revival among the Jews and the Lord will call a remnant from among them to herald the coming of the King, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom to all the nations of the world (see Rev. vii). The great multitude coming out of the great tribulation (Rev. vii:9-17) is not the Church, but the multitude represents those of the nations who believed this final witness, given by the 144,000 Israelites, not Gentiles, who bear this final witness.

14. *His return is preceded by the great tribulation and followed by the judgment of the nations.* Nowhere is it predicted that when Christ comes back He will find a converted world, that righteousness and peace will reign before His return. The Lord and His Apostles teach something entirely different. (See Matthew xxiv:21; Luke xxi:25, 26; Revelation in its main portion reveals the events of this time of greatest trouble. He returns at the close of the great tribulation, Matthew xxiv:29. He will come as judge after the tribulation. See Matthew xxv:31; 2 Thess. i: 8, 9).¹

15. *The New Testament reveals His coming as a blessed hope unknown in former ages.* Whatever revelation the Lord Jesus Christ predicted as to His visible, personal and glorious return, preceded by the great tribulation and the manifestation of the Antichrist, is also revealed in the Old Testament. But in one passage He spoke of something new, altogether new, unknown to the prophets and to the Old Testament Saints. This is found in John xiv:1-4 It is the

first intimation of the blessed hope for the Saints of the New Testament.

It was given to the Apostle Paul to receive the full revelation concerning "that blessed hope" (See again 1 Thess. iv:16-18 and 1 Cor. xv:51, 52). This blessed hope has rightly and scripturally been termed "the coming of the Lord for His Saints" in distinction from "the coming of the Lord with His Saints." The latter takes place when He is visibly revealed out of heaven.

16. *The coming of the Lord for His Saints takes place before the end of the age sets in, before the final great apostasy, before the great tribulation and before the manifestation of the man of sin.* The denial of this has led to much confusion. Good men teach, what is an unscriptural theory, that the Church will be on earth to the very end of the tribulation period. Some speak of the Church having yet to pass "through a Gethsemane experience." But where is this taught in Scripture? Nowhere. The second chapter of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians shows that the falling away and the man of sin, cannot come as long as there is the hindering One on the earth. As we have shown in the exegetical note on that chapter, that One is the Holy Spirit. He dwells in the true Church, as He dwells in every individual believer, and must be taken out of the way first. He will be taken away in hindering power with the rapture of the Saints.

The reason why our Lord said nothing about tribulation to His disciples in the upper room when He first mentioned "that blessed hope," is because the true Church has nothing whatever to do with that period of time. There is no tribulation of a punitive character in store for her, nor any wrath whatever (1 Thess. i:10). The suffering Saints during the great tribulation are Jews. In the Old Testament it is spoken of as "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jerem. xxx:7); and Daniel

speaks of it in the same way (Dan. xii:1, 2). The scope of the Book of Revelation proves conclusively, that before even the Lord receives the book of judgments and tribulation from God's hands, the Saints must first be brought to glory. Not one of the Epistles has anything to say about that great tribulation. There is a significant silence. It is because the true Church will not be here when that time comes.

17. *All true believers will be taken when the Lord comes.* Some teach that only a certain class of believers will participate in the glorious rapture. According to some only those will meet the Lord who believe in His coming; holiness sects claim that one must have had a "deeper" experience to be fit for His coming. Others make "Divine healing" the test, or the "gift of tongue" delusion, or something else. All these theories are not found in Scripture. Every child of God, no matter how ignorant, how weak in himself, how imperfect in walk and service, is nevertheless a child of God and as such belongs to the Father's house. Every true believer, independent of his experience, whether "deep" or "shallow," independent of his attainments, is through grace a member of the body of Christ, the Church. No member of that body will be left behind, when He comes for His Saints, for that body will be presented as a complete body in His presence. There is no such thing taught in the New Testament as a "piece-meal rapture," such as certain English and American Bible-teachers claim, to the confusion of simple and young believers.

18. *His coming for the Saints will mean a blessed re-union with our loved ones, who have gone before, and with all the Saints.* It is therefore called "the comforting hope." Apart from the coming of the Lord for His Saints there is no ray of hope in Scripture of meeting our departed ones again. But when He comes for His Saints, those who died in Christ

will be raised in incorruption; we, the living ones, will be changed. All will take place by the mighty power of God, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Together with them we shall be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

19. *The New Testament teaches that there will be a judgment-seat of Christ.* There the hidden things of our lives as to service, Christian living, Christian sacrifice and suffering, will be brought to light. Rewards and crowns will be bestowed upon those who were faithful. Others will be ashamed before Him in His presence and will be crownless, though saved as by fire. Then the Apostle Paul and all the Apostles and martyrs will receive their crowns in that day (2 Tim. iv:8). The blessed hope becomes therefore a great incentive to holy living and untiring, self-sacrificing service.

20. *With His coming the Church will be glorified and share with Him His glory and His kingdom.* He will present the Church to Himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v:27). Every individual believer will see Him as He is and will be like Him. Every believer will receive an eternal body, like unto His own glorious body. His prayer is answered "Father, I will that those Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." His glory will be our glory. With Him we shall be priests and kings, and reign with Him for a thousand years in His Kingdom over the earth. With Him the Church shall judge the world and shall judge Angels.

CHAPTER VIII

FIFTY PROPHECIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WHICH CAN ONLY BE FULFILLED WHEN THE LORD RETURNS

There are hundreds of passages in the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures which are unfulfilled and which cannot be fulfilled till Christ returns. But when He comes back all these prophecies will be accomplished, and as a result the Bible as the inerrant, infallible Word of God will be vindicated. We quote only a small number of these prophecies as to the future, and indicate their coming fulfilment when the King returns to claim His Kingdom. We do not quote the texts in full as we do not want the reader to neglect his Bible in reading this volume. Please take your Bible and look up each passage.

1. *Numbers xxiv:17-25.* The heathen prophet Balaam, forced to speak what the Spirit of God put into his mouth, in the presence of the heathen king of Moab, predicted that a Star should come out of Jacob and of a Sceptre to arise out of Israel. The Star and the Sceptre are predictions of Christ. His first coming is typified by the Star; His second coming by the Sceptre. The judgment of nations and the overthrow of the enemies of the people of God is announced by Balaam. It awaits His return to reign and rule over the earth.

2. *1 Sam. ii:10.* Hannah's prophecy, uttered in her praise, looks forward to the time when He is King, when the Anointed (Christ) is exalted and when He will judge the ends of the earth.

3. *Psalms ii.* In this Psalm the revolt against God and against His Christ is predicted. It has not yet come. Then,

when the nations of the world are opposing God and Christ, the King will be enthroned upon the hill of Zion and receive the nations of the world for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

4. *Psalm viii.* The Son of Man is the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. All things will be put in subjection under His feet. But we see not yet all things put under Him (Hebr. ii). Only when He returns will this be done.

5. *Psalm xxii:27-31.* There will be no turning of the ends of the world, nor will there be the worship of all nations, till Christ receives the Kingdom from the hands of God. He will be the Governor among the nations when He returns.

6. *Psalm xlvi:5-11.* The preceding Psalm reveals the King coming to receive His throne. The results of His coming are given in this Psalm. The nations raged and the kingdoms were moved. Judgment works are then executed by Him. Wars cease unto the end of the earth. The time of universal peace has come. It will not be till He returns.

7. *Psalm xlvii and xlviii.* Both of these Psalms are prophecies of the Kingdom to come.

8. *Psalm l:3-6.* The coming theophany described in this Psalm of Asaph is a prophetic picture of the Lord's coming, when He will gather His Saints together and when the heavens shall declare His righteousness.

9. *Psalm lxxxix:27.* The Firstborn, destined to be higher than the kings of the earth, is Christ. His return will exalt Him above all kings and rulers.

10. *Psalm cii:13, 16.* Mercy is promised to Zion, not the Church, but Israel. Zion in both Testaments never means the Church of Jesus Christ, but always the earthly literal Zion. The building of Zion, the restoration of Israel, will not take place till He appears in glory.

11. *Psalm cx:1-7.* Only the first verse of this prophetic

gem is fulfilled. He is still at the right hand of God waiting till it pleases God to send Him back to earth again. Then He will rule in the midst of His enemies, while Israel will be His willing people and the nations will be judged by Him in righteousness.

12. *Isaiah ii:2-4*. This much quoted prophecy, in spite of all the well meaning efforts to legislate war out of the world, and have universal peace, will not be fulfilled till the Prince of Peace is on the throne. Then nations will learn war no more.

13. *Isaiah ii:10-22*. This day of the Lord is future. It is the day of His visible and glorious appearing.

14. *Isaiah iv:2-6*. This is another prophecy of that coming day of His return and of the glorious results which are in store for Israel.

15. *Isaiah ix:6-7*. The child was born and the Son given, but the seventh verse remains to be fulfilled. He will receive the throne of David and with it the government, when He comes back.

16. *Isaiah xi:4-9*. Here other results of His return are revealed. Groaning creation will be delivered, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

17. *Isaiah xi:10-14*. The restoration of Israel, the re-gathering of the nation from the ends of the earth and the islands of the sea has never taken place. His return will accomplish it (See Matthew xxv:31).

18. *Isaiah xii*. This is a prophetic Song which converted and restored Israel will sing "in that day" when "the Holy One of Israel," Christ, is in their midst.

19. *Isaiah xiii:9-11*. This description of the coming day of the Lord is the same as spoken by Him in Matthew xxv: 29, 30.

20. *Isaiah xxiv*. The whole chapter and those which

follow have been called "Isaiah's little Apocalypse," because the last book of the New Testament, the Revelation, or, Apocalypse, reveals much of what is contained in these chapters. The judgment announced comes in the day of the Lord.

21. *Isaiah xxv:9-12*. This will be fulfilled when Israel's waiting ends and He appears for their deliverance.

22. *Isaiah xxvi:20-21*. The godly remnant of Israel will be kept by the Lord during the days of the coming great tribulation, when judgments are poured out upon the ungodly.

23. *Isaiah xxvii:1*. This is a prophecy of the future punishment of and complete victory over Satan (See Revelation xx:1).

24. *Isaiah xxxii:1*. The King promised to reign in righteousness is the Lord Jesus Christ.

25. *Isaiah xxxii:13-20*. The future outpouring of the Spirit will come with His return, when peace and blessing will be given to Israel.

26. *Isaiah xxxv*. A prophetic picture of the coming kingdom. It necessitates the return of Christ and His personal presence in the midst of His people.

27. *Isaiah xl:5*. The glory of the Lord is His visible glory. All flesh shall see it in that day.

28. *Isaiah xlv:23*. This is quoted in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians. Only after His return will every knee bow before Him and every tongue confess Him.

29. *Isaiah xlix*. The entire chapter is prophetic, revealing Christ's rejection by His own people, their ultimate salvation and the blessings of the kingdom, when He is revealed in His glorious majesty.

30. *Isaiah liv*. These precious promises made to His

afflicted, earthly people and predicting their future glory, and the glory of Jerusalem, will be fulfilled when He returns to earth.

31. *Isaiah lix:20, 21.* This promise is quoted in the Epistle to the Romans xi:26. It is His second coming, and will result in the conversion and acceptance of the remnant of Israel living in that day.

32. *Isaiah lx:* The future conversion of the world, following Israel's conversion, is predicted in this chapter. World conversion in the Old Testament always follows the conversion and restoration of Israel, and these events are the results of the second, visible and glorious coming of Christ.

33. *Isaiah lxi-lxvi.* Each of these closing chapters of Isaiah reveals things to come. They cannot be fulfilled in any other way than by the return of the Lord.

34. *Jeremiah xxiii:5-8.* The reign of the King follows the return of the King, and the blessings promised here and in many other Scriptures will be bestowed upon Israel.

35. *Ezekiel xxxvi-xlvi.* This entire section of the Prophet Ezekiel concerns the future. Nothing contained in these chapters has ever been fulfilled, nor can these prophecies be fulfilled before His return.

36. *Daniel ii: 44-45.* The greater portion of Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic image has passed into history. The smiting stone is future. It is the prophetic symbol of the second coming of Christ and the setting up of His kingdom on earth.

37. *Daniel vii:13-14.* Of this the Lord spoke when on earth. The vision shows Him in His return to receive dominion, glory and a kingdom.

38. *Daniel ix:24-27.* This greatest prophecy in Daniel has also been in greater part fulfilled. The last unfulfilled week is the end of the age, after the true Church has been super-

naturally removed from the earth. It remains to be fulfilled, and at the close of the seven years Christ returns.

39. *Daniel xii:1-4*. The predicted tribulation is the same as predicted by our Lord in Matthew xxiv. It precedes immediately His return, Matthew xxiv:29.

40. *Joel ii and iii*. These events are closely linked with the day of the Lord, when He appears. Note Israel's tribulation, repentance, restoration, spiritual blessings, the outpouring of the Spirit of God, the judgment of nations, are all future.

41. *Amos ix:11-15*. This passage in part is quoted by James in Acts xv:13-17. The restoration of the house of David to kingly rule, the subsequent blessings for all the earth, follow His return.

42. *Habakkuk iii*. This beautiful Ode is a prophecy of His second coming. What precedes His Return, the return itself and what is connected with it, are found in this chapter.

43. *Zephaniah i*. The description of the day of the Lord in its majesty, as given by Zephaniah is the same as revealed by Isaiah, Joel and other prophets.

44. *Haggai ii:6, 7*. The time when heaven and earth will be shaken comes with His return. He is "the desire of all nations."

45. *Zechariah ii:10-13*. The joining of the many nations to the Lord is also future. Though the Gospel has been in the world for nineteen hundred years, there is no nation which is joined unto the Lord. The joining will take place "after the glory" (verse 8), that is, after the Lord has returned.

46. *Zechariah viii:6-8*. The promised salvation of Israel, His people, from the East and the West, comes with His return. No such salvation for Israel is promised anywhere in Scripture apart from His visible return.

47. *Zechariah ix:9-11*. While the Lord Jesus, when on earth, entered Jerusalem as predicted in this prophecy, another coming to Jerusalem is indicated. When that takes place, He will speak peace to the nations. His dominion shall be from sea to sea. It is at His Second Coming.

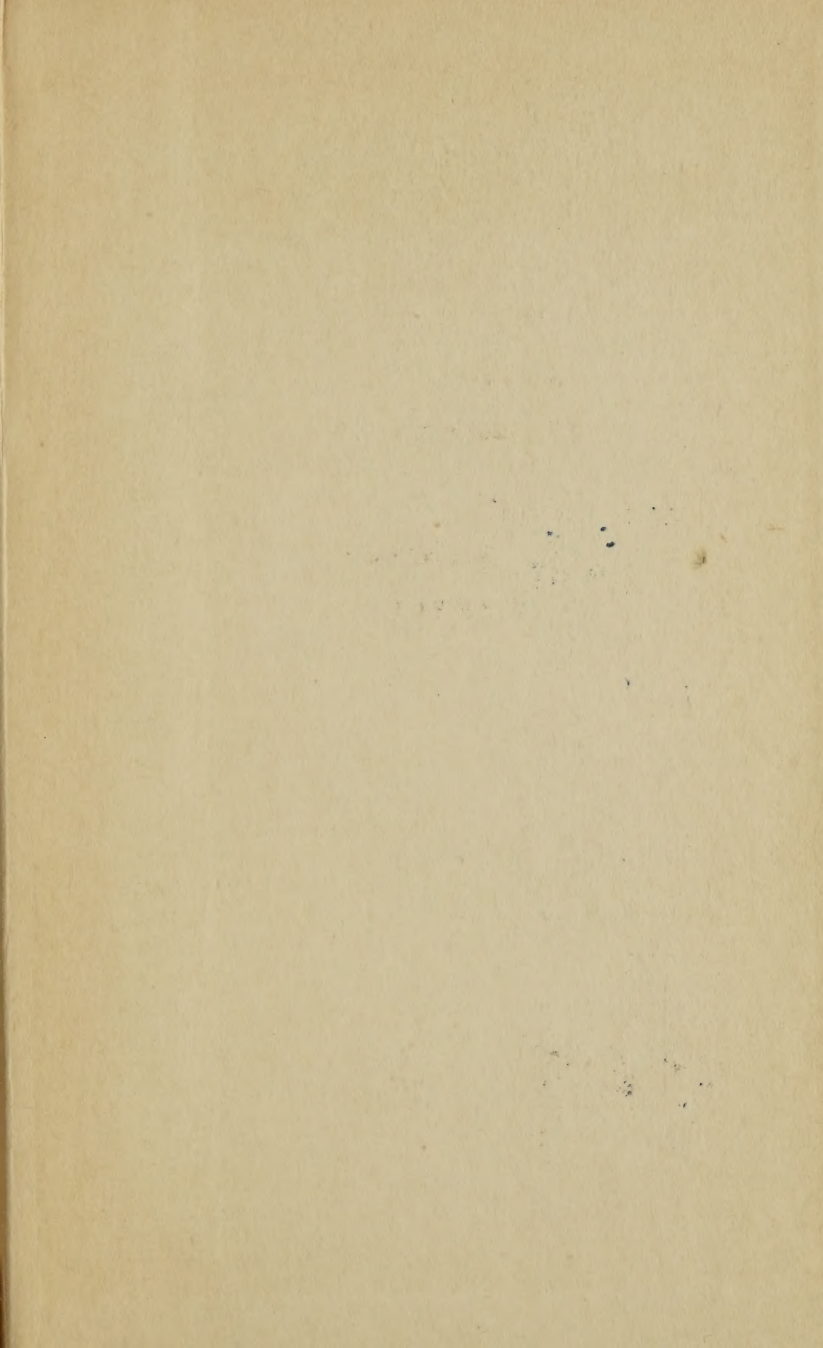
48. *Zechariah xii:10*. Israel's conversion is foretold. It takes place when they look upon Him whom they pierced.

49. *Zechariah xiv*. The whole chapter is prophetic. The predicted siege in the beginning of this chapter has not yet taken place. As we find in other Scriptures, the nations will gather at the very end of the times of the Gentiles against Jerusalem (See Revel. xix:19). Then He will come forth and fight against those nations. His feet will stand upon the Mount of Olives in that day. He comes and all His Saints with Him. The rest of the chapter predicts the kingdom which always follows His return.

50. *Malachi iv:1-3*. The last chapter in the Old Testament predicts His Second Coming, just as the last chapter of the New Testament does the same. From all this we have learned that the Return of the Lord is a prominent, an outstanding doctrine of the entire Bible. The second coming is as prominently revealed as His first coming; both are of equal importance. If there were no second coming of Christ the whole scheme of redemption would break down. And His Return is the Hope, the one great Hope of all.

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